

The Insubstantial Pageant:
is there a civil religious tradition
in New Zealand?

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the concept of 'civil religion' and whether it is applicable to some aspects of New Zealand society. The origin, development and criticism of the concept is discussed, drawing on such scholars as Robert Bellah and John F. Wilson in the United States, and on recent New Zealand commentators.

Using material such as Anzac Day and Waitangi Day commemorations, Governor-Generals' speeches, observance of Dominion Day and Empire Day, prayers in Parliament, the role of Norman Kirk, and other related phenomena, the thesis considers whether this 'evidence' substantiates the existence of a civil religion.

The difficulties that confront any attempted analysis of a civil religion are discussed, with some reflection on the usefulness and applicability of the concept in current New Zealand society. The conclusion is reached, that under the terms of the study area, the suggestion that a civil religion currently exists in New Zealand is not soundly based on the evidence available.

PREFACE

The study of civil religion in its modern guise is a new and somewhat speculative topic. Since Robert Bellah's article in 1967, scholars in the United States have explored the concept with gusto and there has been a wealth of discussion, argument and criticism. Some of this debate has been brought into New Zealand, though since the subject is a relatively new one, there has been little direct comment. As far as I am aware there has been only one full published article devoted to the topic. The speculative nature of the subject is acknowledged by most New Zealand scholars who see it "more an exploratory idea than a proven reality", and their comments have been restricted to snippets of discussion, usually as a side-issue to the main point of an article or chapter.

This is not to say that the idea of civil religion is being ignored but rather that with so little work done in the area so far, it is naturally difficult to develop many coherent themes. Much interest has been shown in the concept, allied with interest in such ideas as 'folk religion' or 'religion of democracy'. The fluidity and ambiguous nature of New Zealand religious expression in the 1980's has led to a great deal of freedom in discussing ways in which religion may take unaccustomed or non-traditional forms. But as yet, the groundwork of ideas has been mostly borrowed from overseas, with New Zealand scholars treading more cautiously.

"Where angels fear to treat..." students may rush in. The newness of the topic has made gathering information and

material to study in an effective manner quite troublesome. Judgements have constantly to be made on what local information may be significant to the topic of civil religion. Overseas suggestions are not always appropriate.

A study area was adopted to help in the selection of information. This area incorporates Robert Bellah's original suggestions as to the nature of civil religion, plus the definition offered by Brian Colless and Peter Donovan. It is hoped that the compass of these two definitions will be enough to include relevant material, yet exclude the irrelevant. As will become plain later in this thesis, difficulties of definition lie at the heart of this topic.

It would be impossible to try and say everything that might be said about civil religion in New Zealand in this thesis. My main intentions are three:

- 1) to offer a broad general introduction to the topic in New Zealand by examining the various commentaries and descriptions offered by scholars and others (Chapter I);
- 2) to locate and present sources and information that may be considered 'evidence' for a civil religion (Chapter II); and
- 3) to highlight some general ideas and problems that arise from this evidence, and to initiate some discussion on the usefulness of the concept of civil religion in a description of some aspects of New Zealand society (Chapter III and IV).

The thesis, by nature of its topic, is often speculative and suggestive, and I hope this orientation will be

seen as a virtue rather than a vice. I have deliberately chosen to use the material in an exploratory way hoping that other students or scholars may find some ideas useful for their own studies.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It could be that the country now needed firm moral foundations even more urgently than the Volga-Don Canal or the great new dam on the Angara River. The question was: how to set about creating them? This was the whole point of the 'Proposal for the Establishment of Civic Temples' ... Rubin had agonised over every word, picking synonyms with the utmost care. One incautious word and people of shallow intellect might easily conclude that he was simply proposing the reintroduction of Christian temples without Christ.

(Alexander Solzhenitsyn, The First Circle, pp. 418-420.)

The relationship between the State and the religion of its people has always been an involved one. It is not a new suggestion that they may sometimes be one and the same thing, that the State may represent values that a citizen can respond to religiously or that religious ideals are espoused by the State for its own purposes. In works as early as Plato's Republic, one can find the suggestion that, for good government, it should be possible and even necessary that the State encourage worship of its ideals:

How then may we devise one of those needful falsehoods of which we lately spoke - just one royal lie which may deceive the rulers, if that be possible, and at any rate the rest of the city?... Citizens, we shall say to them in our tale, you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of you have the power of command, and in the composition of these he has mingled gold, wherefore also they have the greatest honour; others he has made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen he has composed of brass and iron; and the species will be generally preserved in the children. But as all are of the same original stock, a golden parent will sometimes have a silver son, a silver parent a golden son, and so forth. And God proclaims as a first principle to the rulers, and above all else, that there is nothing which they should so anxiously guard, or of which they are to be such good guardians, as of the mixture of elements in the soul. First, if one of their own offspring has an admixture of brass or iron, they shall in no wise have pity on it, but give it the rank which is its due and send it down to the husbandmen or artisans. On the other hand, if there are sons of artisans who have an admixture of gold or silver in them, they will be raised to honour, and become guardians or auxiliaries. For an oracle says that when a man of brass or iron guards the State, it will be destroyed. Such is the tale; is there any possibility of making our citizens believe in it?

Not in the first generation, he replied; but their sons' sons, and posterity after them.¹

1 B.Jowett, trans. 'The Republic' The Dialogues of Plato Vol. 4, eds. R.M.Hare and D.A.Russell (London, Sphere Books Ltd, 1970) pp. 185-6.

Jean Jacques Rousseau first used the words 'civil religion' in Chapter 8, Book 4 of The Social Contract:

Now, it matters very much to the community that each citizen should have a religion. That will make him love his duty; but the dogmas of that religion concern the State and its members only so far as they have reference to morality and to the duties which he who professes them is bound to do to others. Each man, may have, over and above, what opinions he pleases, without it being the Sovereign's business to take cognisance of them; for, as the Sovereign has no authority in the other world, whatever the lot of its subjects may be in the life to come, that is not its business, provided they are good citizens in this life.

There is therefore a purely civil profession of faith of which the Sovereign should fix the articles, not exactly as religious dogmas, but as social sentiments without which a man cannot be a good citizen or a faithful subject. While it can compel no one to believe them, it can banish from the State whoever does not believe them...

The dogmas of civil religion ought to be few, simple, and exactly worded, without explanation or commentary. The existence of a mighty, intelligent and beneficent Divinity, possessed of foresight and providence, the life to come, the happiness of the just, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctity of the social contract and the laws: these are positive dogmas. Its negative dogmas I confine to one, intolerance, which is part of the cults we have rejected.²

Both Plato and Rousseau conceived of a religion that must be 'invented' in order to serve the larger purposes of a society, but Bellah's conception of state or civil religion is that it has arisen out of the relationship between people and government.

In 1967 Robert Bellah published an article called 'Civil Religion in America' in which he argued that there "exists alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches an elaborate and well-institutionalised civil

² Rousseau, J.J. The Social Contract (London, J.M.Dent & Sons, 1923) p. 121.

religion in America"³. Whereas Rousseau was arguing for the construction of a 'civil religion' to revitalise or even replace old church forms, Bellah was contending that there was something similar now existing in American society and which had emerged spontaneously from it. Bellah based his initial arguments on a close examination of John F. Kennedy's inaugural address and Abraham Lincoln's speeches, suggesting that they used words like 'God' in a particular way to emphasise the traditional bonding of people, nation and sacred ideals. This, he claimed, was neither explicitly Christianity nor simply patriotism but something definably between the two - yet incorporating aspects of both. He said that this 'civil religion' is:

... a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalised in a collectivity. This religion - there seems no other word for it - while not antithetical to, and indeed sharing much in common with, Christianity, was neither sectarian nor in any specific sense Christian.⁴

Behind the civil religion at every point lie Biblical archetypes: Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, Sacrificial Death and Rebirth. But it is also genuinely American and genuinely new. It has its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and sacred places, its own solemn rituals and symbols.⁵

On a cursory investigation there does seem to be something in what Bellah claims. Events such as Memorial Day, the President's Inauguration, Address to the Nation, Thanksgiving Day and the more minor celebrations of Veteran's

3 Bellah, R.N. 'Civil Religion in America', American Civil Religion, eds. R.E.Richey and D.G.Jones (New York, Harper & Row, 1974) p. 21.

4 Ibid., p. 29.

5 Ibid., pp. 40-41.

Day, and the birthdays of Washington and Lincoln, form, in Bellah's words, "an annual ritual calendar for the civil religion"⁶.

Bellah draws on the pioneering article of W. Lloyd Warner, 'An American Sacred Ceremony'⁷, which analyses and interprets Memorial Day, the American day of remembrance to its war dead. Bellah says that:

... the Memorial Day observance, especially in the towns and smaller cities of America, is a major event for the whole community involving a rededication to the martyred dead, to the spirit of sacrifice, and to the American vision... Memorial Day has acted to integrate the local community into a national cult.⁸

American writers were not slow to seize upon Bellah's ideas and a whole literature has grown up around the topic with a bewildering array of descriptive terms. Different writers have interpreted 'civil religion' variously as 'democratic faith', 'protestant civic piety', 'the American Way of Life', 'zealous nationalism', or 'American self-image'. Some scholars have treated the concept favourably, others critically, but as Bellah himself observed in a later article, 'American Civil Religion in the 1970s', the term 'civil religion' has become part of the description of American society - whether or not one agrees with it.⁹

6 Bellah, p. 33.

7 W. Lloyd Warner 'An American Sacred Ceremony', American Civil Religion, eds. R.E.Richey and D.G.Jones (New York, Harper & Row, 1974) pp. 89-111.

8 Bellah, p. 33.

9 Bellah, R.N. 'American Civil Religion in the 1970s', American Civil Religion, eds. R.E.Richey and D.G.Jones (New York, Harper & Row, 1974) pp. 255-272.

One early critic of the notion of civil religion was John F. Wilson who, in an article entitled, 'A Historian's Approach to Civil Religion', was sceptical of the concept. Just "for the fun of it"¹⁰ he searched public Presidential documents, including inaugural addresses and State of the Union messages, looking for evidence that supported "the judgement that at least in one of his official roles the incumbent becomes a central cult figure constrained to speak for the national faith as part of a civil religion"¹¹. Wilson concluded:

... taken as a whole, they (Presidential documents) seem to me to reflect prevailing cultural epochs and immediate social circumstances far more than they sustain the position that they are evidence for a tradition of civil religion. Indeed, the relative infrequency of the references, their variety and conventional content, and the apparent absence of a framework or set of conventions constraining each incumbent not only comprises inadequate evidence for a differentiated civil religion but serves to disconfirm the hypothesis. It is evidence for a negative judgement.¹²

In his book Public Religion in American Culture¹³, Wilson went more fully into his analysis of the civil religious 'cult' and came out against it, in favour of something more generalised which he called 'public religion'. This appears to be the idea that the American people have always had some sort of 'public religion' by which standards and values are set; whether it be based on the republican

10 Wilson, J.F. 'A Historian's Approach to Civil Religion', American Civil Religion, eds. R.E.Richey and D.G.Jones (New York, Harper & Row, 1974) p. 132.

11 Ibid., p. 132.

12 Ibid., p. 133.

13 Wilson, J.F. Public Religion in American Culture (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1979).

Protestantism of Benjamin Franklin's time, or a purer form of Christianity, or a notion such as 'the American Way of Life'. It is a sort of basic religious impulse which unifies in a fairly non-specific way, and which Wilson suggests has declined in intensity. He sees 'civil religion' as an aspect of this religious movement which may, or may not, revitalise American religion.

It is far beyond the scope of this thesis, and only incidental to it, to spend much time on the differing and complex ways in which American scholars have examined the notion of civil religion. For our purposes it is sufficient to note three things:

1) In recent scholarship the term 'civil religion' has been widely adopted in the United States and the concept has been generally favoured as both genuine and useful. One writer notes: "the amazing popularity of this concept"¹⁴.

2) There has been little agreement over what civil religion is:

The primary problem which exists in the discussion concerning civil religion in America is the problem of clarifying and defining terms. While the area of civil religion has been basically the domain of the social scientists and only relatively recently has invited the interest and concern of religious historians and theologians, the amount of study concluded so far by both groups lacks any common fund of definitions and terms.¹⁵

14 Neal, M.A. 'Civil religion, theology and politics in America', America in Theological Perspective, ed. T.M.McFadden (New York, The Seabury Press, 1976) p. 102.

15 Schneider, M.L. 'A Catholic Perspective on American Civil Religion', America in Theological Perspective, ed. T.M.McFadden (New York, The Seabury Press, 1976) p. 124.

3) It is Robert Bellah's original description of civil religion that has largely travelled to New Zealand, so that when New Zealand scholars have looked at the subject they have examined the same sort of data that Bellah had recourse to in the United States, such as speeches, national days and important public rituals.

The earliest reference that I can find to any sort of civil religion in New Zealand occurs in John Harré's essay in Landfall 1966. He briefly suggests that:

There are some non-Christian ritual observances in New Zealand which do serve the social functions of religion. Perhaps our most important indigenous ceremonial is the Anzac Day ceremony. It is coincidental that this is associated with Christianity... It is a memorial cult which mobilises more people into a ritual expression of togetherness than any conventional religious observance... The Poppy is the only really important symbol New Zealand has off the sporting field.¹⁶

In 1973 the New Zealand Methodist, under the editorship of John Bluck, published a double-page feature article entitled 'Civil Religion'. A front-page summary described the contents of the article:

We take a critical look at groups like the Masons, Lions, and Rotarians, at national festivals like Anzac, Christmas and Waitangi Day, at moralists, politicians and poets, to see whether Kiwi religion is more civil than Christian.

The article itself comments on how civil religion is viewed:

This feature sees Civil Religion as a system of faith and worship that starts more with allegiance to some particular cultural style, political creed or moral code than it does to a God who makes himself known through the person of Jesus... We believe such a

16 Harré, J. 'To Be or Not to Be: an anthropologists view', Landfall 20, No. 1 (March 1966), p. 41. Harré made reference to Anzac Day in similar terms in the co-authored book New Zealand by J.Harré and K.Jackson (London, Thames and Hudson, 1969) p. 132.

religion is less than Christian but the purpose of this feature is not to condemn forms of civil religion for almost inevitably they involve the best of ideals, the worthiest of causes, the finest of motives. For Christians they are not all wrong, but they are all incomplete.¹⁷

This entire feature is, as far as I know, the fullest attempt in New Zealand to discuss civil religion. The two main points that seem to emerge from the article are: 1) the large 'umbrella' of activities, days, clubs and events that could be considered to belong to a civil religion, and 2) that it is, for all its piety, a misguided and possibly un-Christian religion.

In a 1974 paper entitled, 'Religion: Civilised and Moralised', John Bluck makes some additional comments:

The God of civil religion is not Yahweh but the idea of democracy, or moral decency, or social responsibility... New Zealand wears its civil religion lightly enough to only feel its weight at moments of crisis... Evidence for civilised religion here is no stronger than it ever was.¹⁸

Several scholars made passing references to ideas on civil religion in subsequent years. In 1980 J.Veitch wrote:

What has been preserved to a surprising degree is the practice of civil religion - prayers said at the commencement of the daily session of parliament, declarations made on oath, the Anzac Day commemoration, the annual Waitangi celebration, the National Song (as well as the National Anthem), and political party annual gatherings which take time out to attend 'unofficially' a church service - all these allow a space for the religious element.¹⁹

17 New Zealand Methodist, 18 October 1973, p. 1. The feature article appeared on pp. 6-7.

18 Bluck, J. 'Religion: Civilised and Moralised', Perspectives on Religion - New Zealand Viewpoints (Auckland, University of Auckland, 1974) pp. 15-16.

19 Veitch, J. 'Heresy and Freedom', Religion in New Zealand, eds. C.Nichol and J.Veitch (Wellington, Victoria University, 1980) p. 141.

In an article in Religion and New Zealand's Future (1982), C. Brown mentions: "... the domesticated Christianity which surfaces at Anzac Day, Waitangi Day and the annual meetings of a surprisingly wide range of groups."²⁰ And in the same collection of essays, W.J. Stuart speculates on 'civil or ersatz religion', saying that this sort of faith, "emphasising national pride, freedom of choice and religious tolerance will emerge as the dominant religious force in New Zealand society."²¹ Stuart also says:

I have argued that a secularised 'civil religion' is emerging in New Zealand to replace organised religion and the radical demand of sectarian groups. The main tenet of this emerging 'civil religion' is religious freedom, the right of each person to work out his/her own salvation in whatever way he/she deems best. Finally, this right to religious self-determination will depend to a large extent, I feel, upon one's access to economic and social power. Those without such power will find the new religious freedom of 'civil religion' oppressive and destructive.²²

In Forty Years On, C. Brown reflects again on civil religion:

In the New Zealand context, the uniting occasions have become national rather than religious or ecclesiastical. Anzac Day and, more recently Waitangi Day, have become festivals of a 'civil religion' which binds together diverse elements in the population more effectively than any Christian rites although clergy are usually to be found participating in such ceremonies along with officials of local and central governments.²³

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- 20 Brown, C. 'Religion in New Zealand: Past, Present and Future', Religion and New Zealand's Future, ed. K.Sharpe (Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1982) p. 19.
- 21 Stuart, W.J. 'Secularization and Sectarianism: the struggle for a religious future for New Zealand', Religion in New Zealand's Future, ed. K.Sharpe (Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1982) p. 86.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 89-90.
- 23 C.Brown Forty Years On (Christchurch, National Council of Churches, 1981) p. 8.

The most substantial recent comments on civil religion can be found in the editorial of Religion in New Zealand Society, in which civil religion and ideas of a New Zealand 'folk religion' receive a long appraisal. Editors B.Colless and P.Donovan concede that civil religion is still mostly "an exploratory idea"²⁴ but suggest that:

... there may be sufficient sanctity and piety in the forms and practices of our civic life to embody a faith of a religious quality: minimal no doubt, but more uniformly New Zealand's own than the faiths of particular churches. It would be, if you like, a religion of patriotism.²⁵

In this editorial, Colless and Donovan widen the scope of the idea of civil religion by suggesting that it could include elements such as 'Democracy' or the 'Welfare State' or even the "idea of a better way of life for New Zealanders"²⁶. They also raise the idea of 'folk religion' which, they argue, cannot be dismissed as just "watered-down church religion"²⁷ and indeed may be a more "substantial field" than civil religion. By 'folk religion' they mean such things as grace at dinners, Scouts' and Guides' promises, school songs and mottoes, popular references to 'God's own country', and so on, and they further suggest that a study of folk religion would have to include:

... the cultic aspects of certain sports and recreations, school traditions, nature-protection movements, popular opinions about the supernatural or occult, alternative ways of coping with illness or despair (chiropractic,

24 B.Colless and P.Donovan, eds. Religion in New Zealand Society, 2nd ed. (Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1985) p. 11.

25 Ibid., p. 11.

26 Ibid., p. 12.

27 Ibid., p. 12.

yoga for health, horoscopes, weight-watchers, Alcoholics Anonymous, and so on), the kinds of wisdom expressed on talkback sessions or in advice columns, and the annual Telethon appeal (a remarkable display of joyful fervour and cheerful giving). Is this religion at all? Yes and no. Once we have moved beyond official religious institutions and admitted wider categories such as civil and folk religion the borders are far less well-defined.²⁸

By broadening the scope and range of what may be called civil or folk religion, Colless and Donovan have followed a pattern well established in the United States, where the interest shown in the concepts has caused a population explosion of terms. Between the United States, Australia and New Zealand, upwards of twenty different expressions, alternatives or definitions can be found clustered around the terms 'folk' or 'civil' religion.²⁹

For the purposes of this thesis, I shall try to keep fairly close to Bellah's original conception of civil religion (see pp. 4-5) along with this definition offered by Colless and Donovan:

(Civil Religion) refers to the way a state or nation, in its laws and practices and official functions, uses forms of words and rites and ceremonies evoking emotions and expressing commitments very similar to those associated with religious attitudes and behaviour.³⁰

To locate possible civil religious activity I have also followed Bellah's lead in looking for a particular use of language - the use of words such as 'God' in a

28 Colless and Donovan, p. 13.

29 Some American and New Zealand expressions have already been mentioned. The book Practice and Belief eds. A. Black & P. Glasner (Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1983) adds descriptions like 'common', 'popular', 'non-church' and 'subterranean theologies' (pp. 169-170).

30 Colless and Donovan, p. 11.

non-specific way or the use of religious imagery that is not specifically Christian. Similarly, in identifying civil religious rituals, I have looked for locations or actions that borrow their 'sacredness' from established religious rituals.

There seems to be a general agreement amongst New Zealand scholars and observers as to where civil religious activities will be found; usually in highly formal public or state occasions such as Anzac Day, Waitangi Day or the Opening of Parliament; occasions where rituals and speeches may interfuse themes of nationhood, faith or duty. These themes may not be explicit but will be more than coincidental, and they may be better substantiated by an overall body of evidence rather than single individual examples. It is well to remember that the concept of civil religion is an imported one and that American civil religious descriptions may have to be redefined to suit a New Zealand context.

CHAPTER II

EVIDENCE

Give me, give me God's own country! there to live
and there to die,
God's own country! fairest region resting 'neath
the southern sky,
God's own country! framed by Nature in her grandest,
noblest mould;
Land of peace and land of plenty, land of wool and
corn and gold.

(Opening lines from 'God's Own Country', by
Thomas Bracken.)

The material chosen as evidence has been divided into six main sections:

- 1) speeches (which includes Governor-Generals', politicians', and the Queen's Christmas broadcasts);
- 2) the political arena (which includes manifestos, memoirs, prayers in Parliament, etc.);
- 3) Norman Kirk;
- 4) Waitangi Day;
- 5) Anzac Day;
- 6) Other New Zealand State Rituals (which includes days such as Dominion Day, Empire Day, Armistice Day).

SPEECHES

Governor-Generals' Speeches

The Governor-General, as the Queen's representative and first in precedence in the New Zealand government, plays an important role in state-sanctioned ceremonies and functions. He is present on nearly all state or semi-state occasions - Opening of Parliament, Waitangi Day, Anzac Day - and participates in his official capacity in numerous public events, organisations, clubs, annual meetings and conferences.

Two published collections of Governor-Generals' speeches have been made:¹ Lord Bledisloes' 1930-1935

1 There is a short collection of speeches made by Sir Bernard Fergusson, specifically on the topic of Christian unity. Recent speeches of the last three Governor-Generals are held 'on view' in Wellington at Government House, but were beyond practical inclusion in this thesis.

term² and Lord Cobham's term of 1957-62³. The distance of twenty-two years between them is sufficient to make possible some interesting comparisons.

Lord Bledisloe's thirty-eight speeches invariably have religious references, although most are short in the style of "the laws of God", "simple faith in God", "Christ-level" "God's Blessing", "God-speed", and so forth.⁴ Many references are made to the Christian faith: "the best of books", "buttressed by Christianity", "It was said in the Bible", and so on.⁵ In several speeches Bledisloe uses extensive religious imagery and expressions. Notably speeches to the Girl Guide Movement, the Youth to Youth Campaign and before the New Zealand Freemasons of which Bledisloe was a Grand Master. At one point in this speech he said:

Human greed, national vainglory, international fears and suspicions, indifference to the suffering of others - all these things must needs be repugnant to a world-wide Order such as ours, founded upon altruism and brotherly love and deriving inspiration from the Volume of the Sacred Law - the Bible - as the source of truth and honesty.⁶

There are four speeches on specifically religious topics under the section 'Religious Movements'. These are

2 Ideals of Nationhood, Lord Bledisloe's Addresses, arr. T.L. Buick. New Plymouth, Thomas Avery & Sons, 1935.

3 Lord Cobham's Speeches 1957-1962, ed. O.S. Hintz, Auckland, 1962.

4 Ideals of Nationhood, Lord Bledisloe's Addresses, arranged T.L. Buick. (New Plymouth, Thomas Avery & Sons, 1935) p. 43, p. 50, p. 223, p. 231, p. 301.

5 Ibid., p. 32, p. 81, p. 114.

6 Ibid., p. 71.

addressed to such groups as a Toc H service at the Anglican cathedral in Nelson, the Salvation Army in Wellington, the Roman Catholic Home of Compassion, and a congregation at St Luke's Presbyterian church in Auckland. Unfortunately there is no recorded speech of Bledisloe on any Anzac Day but he does give two speeches on the opening of public memorials to the dead of the First World War, and the strong patriotic and religious language suggests what must have been typical on any such occasion. For example:

Let your Anzac Day from tomorrow onwards throughout the years that are to come be not an occasion of mourning for the dead, still less of whining over transient misfortune or hardships, but rather a clarion call to discipline, energy, self-reliance and helpful, sympathetic, stimulating comradeship, with the consciousness that behind the seeming frailty of all human beings, made in the image of the Divinity, there lurks a spark of the Divine nature which when kindled into the flame of lofty patriotism leads on to heroism and immortality. With clarity of vision, which will pierce the gloom of sorrow and adversity, let us, in this land of hope and sunshine, as we bow our heads in thankfulness for the deeds which have laid the foundations of the nations greatness, say with trustful confidence, "God's in His Heaven: all's well with the world".⁷

Bledisloe's two speeches in 1934 at Waitangi, where he has gifted the Waitangi Estate to the nation, are unremarkable in religious references, but the two prayers that he wrote especially for the occasion freely mix themes of nationhood, race and Christian creed. For example, this is the first prayer:

O God, who in Thy beneficent wisdom ninety-four years ago ordained that strife and bloodshed between races and tribes in this territory should cease, and that the inhabitants of these islands should thenceforward be knit together as one people under the British Crown, grant that the sacred compact then

7 Ideals of Nationhood, Lord Bledisloe's Addresses
(arr. T.L. Buick) pp. 225-226.

made in these waters may be faithfully and honourably kept for all time to come, to the glory of Thy Holy Name and the peace, contentment, and ordered progress of a united nation, for the sake of Him who brought peace and good will upon earth, Jesus Christ, our Lord.⁸

It is clear at least from these speeches that Lord Bledisloe's free use of religious language on State-recognised occasions and ceremonies adds further authority to them. Certainly there is no evidence of constraint on his part and the references are generally directly Christian in character. This is in contrast to Lord Cobham's speeches made some twenty-two years later.

Half of Lord Cobham's speeches have no religious references at all, compared to four-fifths of Bledisloe's. The references in the former are nearly always brief: "loyalty to God", "by God's Grace", "the right to worship God",⁹ with few Christian allusions. Indeed only one speech in the seventy given has developed religious references. This is to the New Zealand Countrywoman's Institute, where he said:

And more than that, He is the giver of what we call the Spirit of Man. He alone can produce all the intangible and invisible qualities in a human being, such as love and memory and bravery, and the supreme gifts that no scientist can reproduce or restore. "Man is the carrier of life, and God alone is Life" wrote Emmanuel Swedenborg. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" said our Lord.¹⁰

Lord Cobham's speech at Waitangi in 1959 restricts himself to a brief mention of a "Higher Power"¹¹, and his

8 Ideals of Nationhood, Lord Bledisloe's Addresses (arr. T.L. Buick) p. 156.

9 Lord Cobham's Speeches 1957-1962 (ed. O.S. Hintz) p. 4, p. 15, p. 17.

10 Ibid., p. 27.

11 Ibid., p. 99.

speech at the Wanganui War Memorial in 1958 contained only one religious reference, and indeed is a comment upon itself: "The old sanctions, religious and political, have lost their power both to control and inspire. The fear of the Lord has given place to the fear of the nuclear bomb."¹²

The differences between the two sets of speeches are interesting. Bledisloe's religious references can nearly always be understood as Christian, whereas Cobham's references are more frequently less specific and couched in general terms such as 'God', 'religion', and 'worship'; terms which need not be interpreted as Christian. Cobham's speeches are much more in sympathy with Bellah's conception of a civil religion in that the religious allusions are general enough not to offend any particular faith. The sharp decline in the number of religious allusions between the two sets of speeches should be noted as well.

Every Governor-General reads a formal speech as the Queen's representative at each opening of Parliament. In examining the opening speeches given at the sessions of each *new* government State Opening from 1915 onwards there is found a remarkable uniformity of style. *One* religious reference, in the *last* paragraph of the speech, is *always* made. There is no enlargement or reduction. As an example here are the last paragraphs from the Speeches from the Throne of 1915 and 1984:

I trust that Divine Providence may guide your deliberations to the advantage of our Sovereign, of his Empire, and of this Dominion.¹³

12 Lord Cobham's Speeches 1957-1962, p. 200.

13 New Zealand Parliamentary Debates v1.172 (1915) p. 6.

Honourable Members of the House of Representatives, never before have we had so little time in which to do so much, I commend all these matters to your careful consideration and I pray that divine guidance will attend your deliberations.¹⁴

Since 1972 the last thirteen references in all the Governor-Generals' speeches have been exactly the same, 'divine guidance', usually in small capitals. Sir John Marshall, a former Prime Minister of New Zealand (1972-74), tells in his Memoirs an anecdote where the customary reference to Almighty God had been omitted. The then current Governor-General brought it to the Prime Minister's attention with a cryptic "refer A-G". The Prime Minister referred it to the Attorney-General.¹⁵

Royal Christmas Broadcasts

Voices Out of the Air is a collection of all the Royal Christmas broadcasts from 1932 to 1981. In these short speeches nearly all (nine exceptions) have references to God, and all employ some sort of religious terms such as 'Christmas spirit', 'Christmas message', 'soul', 'faith', and so on. The frequency of references to God has declined slightly over the entire period whilst there has been a small increase in Christian references - after all these are *Christmas* speeches.

Elizabeth II has tended to use more Christian expressions than the previous monarchs, something, that when considering these broadcasts are to the entire

14 New Zealand Parliamentary Debates No.1 (1984) p. 12.

15 Marshall, J. Memoirs, Volume 1: 1912-1960 (Auckland, Collins, 1983) p. III.

Commonwealth, one might not have expected. For example, in the 1978 broadcast the Queen mentions the 'birth of Christ', and later, "Christians have the compelling example of the life and teaching of Christ".¹⁶ In the 1980 speech she quotes from a hymn, 'Immortal, Invisible, God only Wise', mentions the "Wise Men and the Shepherds", and quotes from a Tennyson poem which includes the line: "Ring in the Christ that is to be".¹⁷ In the ten last published broadcasts from 1972-1980, only the 1974 speech did *not* make any clear Christian reference.

Politicians' Speeches

There was published during the Second World War an interesting cluster of speeches by the three main political figures of the day: Michael Joseph Savage, Peter Fraser and Sydney Holland. A Clarion Call was M.J. Savage's endeavour to obtain more volunteers for the forces in 1940. In what was after all the bleakest hour of the allies' fortunes his religious expressions are brief yet central to his plea: "God knows, we did not want it", "and would to God that I did not have to say it", and "some would call it godlessness" (i.e. Hitler's Nazi empire)¹⁸ are the three references to God. In other places he says: "With all my heart and soul do I pray that our arms may prevail

16 Voices Out of the Air: the Royal Christmas Broadcasts 1932-1981 (London, Heineman, 1981) p. 146, p. 148.

17 Ibid., p. 153, p. 155, p. 156.

18 Savage, M.J. A Clarion Call (Wellington, Government Printer, 1940) p. 4, p. 5, p. 7.

and cast out this devil out of Germany", "We all look forward to the return of peace, praying that it may be soon", "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his own soul?"¹⁹ Such religious language seems to come quite naturally to Savage, and this speech is one of the clearest examples so far found of a politician using religious language to emphasise the importance of a national cause.

Sydney Holland, then Leader of the National Party, recorded his philosophy and views in a booklet called Passwords to Progress in 1943. It is not a publication of any actual speeches but a written summation of Holland's views. He quotes Abraham Lincoln at one point ("Government of the people, by the people, for the people") and mentions Lincoln on two other occasions.²⁰ In another paragraph he manages to combine decency, comfort, God and hard work in one sentence: "We wish to see the people of New Zealand enjoying the highest possible standard of living - moral, spiritual and material, but the desire to achieve a high standard of living without earning it can only result in moral decay".²¹

Another paragraph is entitled 'A Christian Democracy' where he says: "No form of Government that lacks a spiritual basis can last".²² This curiously foreshadows Eisenhower's

19 Savage, M.J. A Clarion Call, p. 7, p. 4, p. 7.

20 Holland, S.G. Passwords To Progress (New Zealand National Party, 1943) p. 4, p. 17, p. 18.

21 Ibid., p. 3.

22 Ibid., p. 9.

famous remark ("Our Government makes no sense unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious faith - and I don't care what it is") and is making the same connection between the authority of God legitimating the activities of the State. In some ways Holland goes further by connecting his proposed government specifically with Christianity. He notes that the National Party supports the campaign for Christian Order and says elsewhere that only. "Through adherence to Christian principles can true political and economic democracy be established".²³

In 1946 there was published a selection of Peter Fraser's wartime addresses In Time of War, to honour both the man, and one feels, the spirit that united people during the war. Fraser often uses words of an inspirational and religious kind such as: "fervent prayers", "Christian principles", "building of Jerusalem", "sacred duty", "powers of evil".²⁴ He quotes from the Book of Ruth at one point (thy God, my God)²⁵, and directly employs the word God in the final speech entitled "Victory". He said: "Let us rejoice and let us lift up our hearts in gratitude to God".²⁶

Fraser gave speeches on such occasions as the dedication of a memorial to Michael Joseph Savage on 'The

23 Holland, S.G. Passwords To Progress, p. 9.

24 Fraser, P. In Time of War: selections from the addresses of the Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser (New Zealand Labour Party, 1946) p. 6, p. 11, p. 29, p. 33, p. 39.

25 Ibid., pp. 12-13.

26 Ibid., p. 40.

Charter of the United Nations', and on 'The British Commonwealth'. Though perhaps he does not use as many direct correspondences between the State and Christian concerns as does say, M.J. Savage and S.G. Holland, it is clear that the effect of religious-like language and quotations in his speeches implies such a relationship.

Three major political figures in New Zealand's political history were selected and their major speeches examined in Hansard to see if they employed any consistent religious references. The three were all Prime Ministers: Michael Joseph Savage (1935-1940), Walter Nash (1957-1960) and Norman Kirk (1972-1974). Of the three, only in Savage's speeches and debates could be found any regular religious references. The two following are typical:

It is useless to talk of Christian principles unless they are reflected in our everyday lives.²⁷

I should say it is the right of every individual to claim security when he falls by the wayside, if we are in reality going to be our brothers keeper. I do not think it is any use talking about material wealth unless we can use it for national purposes. We are all in the scheme of things, and as I have said one hundred times none of us knows when our time will come. In a word or two, I should say that that is applied Christianity.²⁸

There were at least seven other important references in his major speeches to Christian themes. In contrast, Walter Nash's and Norman Kirk's speeches seem to contain no references at all of a direct Christian nature, or even use any plainly religious-like language. Considering that Nash

27 New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, vl. 251 (1938) p. 545.

28 New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, vl. 252 (1938) p. 423. (Social Security Bill).

was a prominent Christian socialist, and Kirk, if not explicitly a Christian, implied a Christian morality and ethic in his life, this absence of references may seem surprising. It may indicate that recent New Zealand politicians are less willing to publicly employ authority from God than were earlier political generations. This idea seems further supported when we will come to consider political manifestos, memoirs and Norman Kirk.

Two results have emerged from this brief section on speeches. First, that as the speeches become more historically recent there is a decline in public religious references - a phenomenon one might have expected. And second, that the speeches of Bledisloe, Savage, Holland, and Fraser can all be seen as showing some of the characteristic expressions and use of language that one might well expect from a civil religion.

THE POLITICAL ARENA

This small miscellaneous section covers such associated political phenomena that might be of interest, such as manifestos, political memoirs and prayers in Parliament.

Manifestos

Various party political manifestos for the last few elections were researched, looking for statements that might employ some sort of religious-like language. The Labour Party manifestos of 1966 and 1969 showed no interest

in religious matters. The 1972 Manifesto stated under the environmental portfolio: "Labour recognises the right of every New Zealander to live in wholesome surroundings. Nobody has the right to pollute. The Labour Party accepts the moral responsibility towards future generations."²⁹

This remark is the closest that this Party gets to any hint of religious concerns. In the manifestos of 1975, 1978, 1981 and the policy releases of 1984 there is no further comment. There are plenty of values presented in the manifestos, such as hard work, decent standard of living, basic education, and so on, but nothing more idealistic that cannot be expressed by the purely secular ideal of a decent standard of living for everyone.

The National Party shows a similar caution in regard to religious imagery of any kind. Nothing in any of the election manifestos from 1963 onwards shows the slightest hint towards any expression of religious ideas. In the 1978 election policy, again under the environment section they say: "New Zealand's natural environment is more than a valuable resource, it constitutes our life-blood."³⁰

The two newer parties, the New Zealand Values Party and the New Zealand Party use negligible religious imagery. The 1972 Values manifesto mentions our "spiritual poverty", "technology at the expense of the human spirit",

29 1972 Election Manifesto: Target Nationhood, a chance for opportunity and initiative, (New Zealand Labour Party, 1972) p. 10.

30 National Party 1978 General Election Policy: we're keeping our word, (New Zealand National Party, 1978) p. 15.

and 'unenlightened path'.³¹ The New Zealand Party uses no obvious religious language in the promulgation of its ideals.

Of all the parties the New Zealand Social Credit Political League evinces the most forthrightness in the religious expressions, though the references are still few and far between. In 1952 the booklet Social Credit is the Way Out talks disparagingly of "financial orthodoxy" and goes on to state: "so great would be its success (Social Credit's) so amazing its transformation of the whole social life of the people, that the good news would spread to the ends of the earth."³²

In another political leaflet, New Zeal for New Zealand, the League quotes the American Constitution ("an inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"), and says: "It believes that every individual is a shareholder in the common heritage of Civilisation and that the wealth that flows from this heritage is part of his birthright."³³

The Little Green Socred Book (1972) mentions God in quotation from Thomas Bracken: "Men of every creed and race gather here before thy face - Asking thee to bless this

31 Blueprint for New Zealand: an alternative future. (New Zealand Values Party, 1972) p. 1, p. 1, p. 2.

32 Social Credit is the Way Out, (New Zealand Social Credit Political League, 1952) p. 8, p. 8.

33 New Zeal for New Zealand: Social Credit's Answer to Chaos (New Zealand Social Credit Political League, 1952 approx.) p. 14.

place: God defend our free land!"³⁴, and the Social Credit 1978 manifesto talks of "ecological salvation".³⁵

The paucity of results from nearly all these manifestos is perhaps not surprising, but it indicates how far political parties in New Zealand will *now* avoid any suggested links with a religious affiliation. There is expressed a plentitude of values - honesty, integrity, a decent living wage, care for the needy or disadvantaged - which are predominantly expressed in humanistic or secular terms devoid of religious imagery. In recent years, the parties, if they express any religious-like concerns at all do so in the context of nature conservation and protecting the environment.

Memoirs

Political memoirs seem to come in two styles: those personally written by their authors, such as by Robert Muldoon and John Marshall, and those 'ghosted' by other writers on behalf of the politician. There have been few memoirs written in New Zealand, but those that have, have the author (or subject) usually expressing a religious conviction of some sort.

Walter Nash's book New Zealand: a Working Democracy although not strictly a memoir does contain some of the author's religious beliefs. On pages 177-179 is the fullest

34 The Little Green Sacred Book (New Zealand Social Credit Political League, 1972) p. 1.

35 Social Credit 1978 Election Manifesto (New Zealand Social Credit Political League, 1978) p. 20.

expression he gives in the book to these beliefs, stressing the relationship he perceives between a spiritual faith and the modern economic order: "Spiritual values, if we allow them, as we should allow them, to govern our actions and our attitudes, will lead us directly and unfailingly towards higher material standards of comfort and security for all men". And later again he states: "If the world we seek to build after this war is to be a free world, if the peace we seek to secure is to be a lasting peace, the first condition to be met is greater economic security and higher standards of living for the common people of all lands. That principle is inherent in the Christian philosophy". Lastly, he reaffirms this position: "It is the practical application of Christian principles that will determine the future of the world and the future of our own lives".³⁶

Sir John Marshall in his autobiography comments several times on the deep influence of his Christian faith. His memoirs emphasise his private Christian convictions which undergirded his public duties and statements.

Another formative element of those childhood years was the benign influence of the Christian faith, which I absorbed by example and learned by precept... When I was old enough to read for myself I grew into the habit of reading the Bible every night before going to sleep, and continued to do so until the disruption of the war when it became an intermittent exercise, and so it went on until I became a World Vice President of the United Bible Societies, and thought I should set a better example... On my part there have been shortcomings, which are obvious enough to me which will become more obvious as this narrative proceeds, but at least I can say that for

36 Nash, W. New Zealand: a working democracy (London, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1943) p. 177, p. 178, p. 179.

me, that is the way, the truth and the life, for which "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield".³⁷

The man that succeeded John Marshall as leader of the National Party, Robert Muldoon, comments in his first book on his religious beliefs: "I stayed with the Baptists until I married an Anglican, but in recent years my views have been ecumenical and I tend to assess churches by people rather than doctrinal peculiarities".³⁸ Subsequent volumes in the autobiographical series Muldoon by Muldoon³⁹ and My Way⁴⁰ do not elaborate further.

The Holyoake Years by R. Doughty⁴¹ do not mention any of the subject's religious beliefs; Lange by V. Wright⁴² sketches a brief Methodist background; and Rowling: The Man and the Myth by J. Henderson says: "Although Bill Rowling is not an active Christian in the church going sense, he does believe in the Christian ethic of service."⁴³ "I accept a responsibility while I can to try in my own way to translate God's will into some possible action that will make a better life for others."⁴⁴

37 Marshall, J. Memoirs volume 1: 1912-1960 (Auckland, Collins, 1983) pp. 21-22.

38 Muldoon, R.D. The Rise and Fall of a Young Turk (Wellington, Reeds, 1974) p. 12.

39 Muldoon, R.D. Muldoon by Muldoon, (Wellington, Reeds, 1977).

40 Muldoon, R.D. My Way (Wellington, Reeds, 1981).

41 Doughty, R. The Holyoake Years, R.Doughty, 1977.

42 Wright, V. Lange, (Wellington, Unicorn, 1984).

43 Henderson, J. Rowling: the man and the myth, (Auckland, Australia and New Zealand Books with Fraser Books, 1981) p. 182.

44 Ibid., p. 183.

In Beetham George Bryant wrote:

The prophetic voice possessed nothing religious in it, nothing fanatical. Beetham is a nominal Presbyterian, believing in some wider influence guiding our future, but not a worshipper. His interest in astrology is symbolised by the pendant sign Aquarius he often wears around his neck.⁴⁵

It would be fair to say that throughout these memoirs the matter of religion, with perhaps the exception of John Marshall, is only briefly touched on. Most of the subjects claim some sort of religious background however, and this clearly is, in whatever way, an influence upon their public duties.

Prayers in Parliament

In Parliament members participate in several expressions of religious practice. At the beginning of each day's sitting when the Speaker enters the Chamber, all members rise in their places and the Speaker reads the following prayer:

Almighty God, humbly acknowledging our need for Thy guidance in all things and laying aside all private and personal interests, we beseech Thee to grant that we may conduct the affairs of this House and of our country to the Glory of thy Holy Name, the maintenance of true religion and justice, the honour of the Queen, and the public welfare, peace and tranquillity of New Zealand, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.⁴⁶

This prayer in its current form has been unaltered since 1962.

There are three informal prayer groups held amongst Members of Parliament and the Parliamentary staff. 'Prayer

45 Bryant, G. Beetham (Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1981) pp. 44-45.

46 New Zealand Almanac (compiled M. Lambert & R. Palenski, Moa Almanac Press, 1982) p. 56.

Breakfasts' were established by John Terris about five years ago for the benefit of Members. They meet two Wednesdays a month for approximately an hour after 8 a.m. and are loosely based on overseas examples in the House of Commons, United States Senate and Australian Parliament.

John Terris has said:

If you are a Christian, these meetings give you an opportunity to share the Christian experience. That is important when you are away from home, as many of our members are... They also help us, whether Christians or not, to see each other as people who have a great deal in common.⁴⁷

Two other prayer groups amongst Members and staff meet regularly in 'the quiet room':

This is a type of chapel but with the religious connotations associated with such a place removed. It was initially intended to be a chapel until it was suggested that not all M.P.s would necessarily be religious, let alone Christians.⁴⁸

NORMAN KIRK

The third part of the evidence is devoted to just one person - Norman Kirk. Here is a figure who, in New Zealand's modest way, seemed to inspire New Zealanders in a fashion like John F. Kennedy in the United States and whose death was just as abrupt and shocking. It has been suggested that the idealism that Norman Kirk appeared to re-kindle amongst New Zealanders is not unconnected with a notion of civil religion:

47 John Terris, quoted Evening Post, 19 June, 1985.

48 Mander, C. Clerk of the Journals and Records, 20 June, 1985. Privately held letter.

... there is to be discerned beneath the surface of American life another incipient religion which is in some respects, the real religion in America and the one which supplies American life with some cohesion. It has sometimes been labelled the 'American Way of Life' and even 'American Shinto'. I suspect there is something similar in New Zealand. It has no clear definition as yet, but I suggest that it was this which rather took us by surprise when it suddenly surfaced briefly at the time of the death of the late Prime Minister, Mr Kirk.⁴⁹

It is useful to compare the speeches and statements Kirk made during his life with the panegyrics and emotional outpourings made after his sudden death. Towards Nationhood (1969) was a small selection of extracts from Kirk's speeches whilst still an ordinary Member of Parliament. There are no direct references to God or Christ or religion in general except for one comment: "More important it (the Welfare State) is a practical Christian expression of our economic and social thinking",⁵⁰ which echoes Michael Joseph Savage's words some thirty years before. In the profile to the book the writer emphasises Norman Kirk's "attachment to New Zealand"⁵¹, and indeed that is the theme that is dominant in the speeches. Norman Kirk as a New Zealander is emphasised; as a Christian he is not commented on.

There was an ambiguity in the way Kirk was responded to by New Zealanders. He seemed to state no explicit Christian or religious creed yet undoubtedly was seen as someone holding values that could easily be labelled as such:

49 Geering, L. The Religion of the Individual (Wellington, New Zealand Council of Civil Liberties, 1975) pp. 23-24.

50 Kirk, N. Towards Nationhood (Palmerston North, New Zealand Books, 1969) p. 64.

51 Ibid., p. 7.

Kirk's parents were staunch Salvation Armyists and for a time he was too. In later life, although not religious himself, he developed a close relationship with church leaders of various denominations. He shared their conservative views on moral questions such as abortion and homosexuality. He also outshone many so-called Christians with the depth and genuineness of his compassion for people in need or in grief.⁵²

In a speech before a meeting organised by the National Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Commission on Justice and Peace (the "Consultation on Development", September 1973), none of the quoted passages gave any specific reference to God or Christian endeavour. Yet there was a good deal that Kirk expressed that would have found favour with such an audience:

Our greatest enemy is indifference' said Mr Kirk... 'a lot of our people would accept great sacrifices if they could see what to do... Mr Kirk warned that development aid 'must allow a dignified way of life for those concerned. It ought never to try and give them our type of society. After all, you needn't have four mortgages and two jobs to be happy'... A recurring theme of the Prime Minister's address was what he called the indivisibility of the human family. He criticised nationalism as a diversion from that course, quoted Pope John's saying, 'all the world's resources belong to all the world's people' and stressed that 'poverty anywhere menaces society everywhere'.⁵³

Big Norm was a compilation on record of Norman Kirk's 'greatest' speeches. It was produced in 1974 after his death. Of religious references to God, or Christianity, there are none. At a Waitangi Day speech, a famous one, he does not employ any religious references, but uses

52 Eagles, J. and James, C. The Making of a New Zealand Prime Minister (Wellington, Cheshire Publishing Ltd, 1973) p. 15.

53 'PM sees vigorous role ahead for New Zealand' The New Zealand Methodist, September 6, 1973, p. 1. News account of the Annual General Meeting of the National Council of Churches.

non-religious values to bring the nation together on its national day. Apart from the expression 'renewal of spirit',⁵⁴ in a speech given on a marae, there is nothing on this audio record of Norman Kirk to indicate that he might have used deliberately or otherwise religious-like images to make an impact. There is no reference in the speeches to Kirk's religious beliefs, either by himself, the narrator, or the sleeve notes.

More than anything else, it was Norman Kirk's *sudden* death that precipitated national mourning and focussed attention on his life and what he had personally meant for individual New Zealanders. Between the two Christchurch daily papers, The Press and The Star, at the time of Kirk's death, there are some thirty pages of news covering the events of his life, work and death. There were full descriptions of speeches at the various services by public figures and parliamentarians; photo-histories of Kirk's life; features on his achievements and career; extensive pictures and news coverage of the cortege, service and burial at Waimate; and editorials on the man and his life. Yet in all this coverage only one reference was found, in The Press editorial on 3rd September, that attempted to link his faith with his work: "Mr Kirk combined national dignity with a Christian compassion."⁵⁵

54 Big Norm: audio documentary of the greatest years of one of New Zealand's greatest men. Wellington, N.Z. Labour Party, 1974. "... so that the revival of maori culture is not just entertainment but a renewal of spirit..."

55 The Press, editorial, September 2nd, 1974.

Death of a Prime Minister⁵⁶ and Life and Career of the Late Prime Minister, Norman Kirk⁵⁷ were short commemorative books, mostly of pictures with printed extracts from the newspapers. In the latter, it quoted a part of the panegyric by the Anglican Archbishop A.H. Johnston, where he talked of "a national day of remembrance", and later stated: "what a tragedy if the death of our Prime Minister doesn't make a difference to our national life". There is no reference to any faith Kirk may have held, but Johnston repeated the significance of Kirk the New Zealander for New Zealand. The concentration on Kirk's *death*, is apparent in both the titles and the text of both books.⁵⁸

The church weekly newspapers, the Methodist New Citizen and the Roman Catholic Tablet, were not so reticent about their appreciation of the man and of the relationship they felt expressed, however unconsciously, by Kirk towards the Christian faith. This is how the Tablet expressed it:

The qualities which made Norman Kirk the great and dynamic leader that he was were already apparent even before he came to the Prime Ministership. I make no bones in saying that it was those qualities of compassion and concern, of vision and of

56 Death of a Prime Minister: Norman Kirk the Big Man of New Zealand. Taita, I.N.L. Print, 1974.

57 Life and Career of the Late Prime Minister, Norman Kirk. Auckland, Wilson & Horton, 1974.

58 Indeed, some eleven years later a Television New Zealand documentary (Listener August 24-30, 1985, p. 23) continued this pre-occupation, almost to excess: "But 'Death of a Prime Minister' was a case of unnecessary sensationalism and over-dramatisation, all to tell us the obvious. Frankly Norman Kirk deserved a better epitaph". (White, R. The Star, Aug. 30, 1985, p. 7).

Christianity that decided the Tablet at the last general election to take the historic step of supporting Labour... The Christian principles in his life were clearly to be seen in his struggle to build a society based on justice and peace and Christian moral standards.⁵⁹

The New Citizen (formerly the New Zealand Methodist) published a long eulogy to Kirk and mentions one aspect of Kirk's funeral and life that is of especial interest:

Mr Kirk's passing demonstrated another kind of unity. He was eulogised by Methodist and Catholic, Salvationist and Anglican alike. The unity of Churches that Mr Kirk had supported in his life, was demonstrated in his death as a considerable reality.

So he was buried by a Presbyterian, an Anglican, and a Roman Catholic, while his father before him was buried by the Salvation Army and his mother by a Methodist minister.

And now Norman Kirk's body lies in the Other Denominations Division of the new Waimate Cemetary - a neutral corner for a man who had no patience with church partisanship.⁶⁰

On the same page the New Citizen also printed a letter from Russell Marshall, M.P. for Wanganui and a Methodist minister. Notice the way Marshall relates *his* Christian faith to Norman Kirk's *personal* influence: "One of the major reasons why I stood for Parliament in 1972 was because I believed in Norman Kirk, and I could see him leading New Zealand in directions consistent with my Christian philosophy."⁶¹

In its next issue (September 11th) the Tablet published the full text of the address of the Most Rev. R.J. Delargey at a commemoration Mass for Norman Kirk held

59 New Zealand Tablet (editorial) September 4th. 'Norman Kirk - R.I.P.' p. 3.

60 New Citizen September 19th, 1974. 'Haere Marie' p. 1.

61 Ibid., p. 1.

on September 3rd. Similarly the New Citizen published the text of the prayer given by the Rev. W.Ford at Kirk's State funeral. Neither of these texts appeared in the local Christchurch newspapers. The archbishop's address reflects and faces the difficulty of relating Kirk's life with Christian teachings.

Like the Wise Men from the East, Norman Kirk had the courage and daring to search for truth all his life. He may not have known it, but the way he chose to live daily took him closer to the Child of Bethlehem, to Jesus, Saviour and Light of the World.

At each step of his way, Norman Kirk grew in the realisation that the truth that was in him, and the teaching of Jesus Christ, were one and the same thing, inspired by the one spirit of God.

He never had quarrel with Christ, but faithfully reflected the legitimate questioning of a world which sees so many Christians and Christian institutions totally at variance with the Gospel. With all his heart he wanted to believe, to confirm his human certainties with a living faith in Christ.⁶²

The Rev. W. Ford's prayer places the references to man and faith side by side in the text.

Lord God we meet as a nation today, in the presence of death, to affirm that life has meaning and purpose, and that lived in the service of others, is wonderfully worthwhile.

We recall with gratitude the life of Norman Kirk.

We pray that we who were associated with him in his family or in the affairs of the nation, may because of his death, be even more closely associated with one another. Help us to be a people more united in making of this nation the people you intend us to be.

Grant to us now the mind and the spirit which was in Jesus Christ our Lord.⁶³

There seemed to be no doubt in anyone's minds that Norman Kirk was significant for New Zealand and New Zealanders, yet it is not easy to say clearly in what way this significance was understood: "There was something

62 New Zealand Tablet. vl. 112 No. 36, September 11th, 1974. p. 1.

63 New Citizen, September 19th, 1974, p. 7.

about 'that big man' which inspired and uplifted New Zealand's image of themselves and of their country"⁶⁴.

There would seem little evidence that Kirk himself employed religious images or symbols to evoke a 'civil religious' response from New Zealanders⁶⁵, and there is a certain ambiguity, even uneasiness, in the way both church and non-church speakers tried to relate whatever faith Kirk had to established Christian doctrines. On the face of it it would be difficult to call Kirk a 'Christian' though he did seem to share Christian-like values.

If the uniting symbols for many New Zealanders are what Mr Kirk's funeral suggests they are, then, this may indicate that the Christian belief of quite a few New Zealanders range from the non-existent to the tenuous and vacuous. This is not to say that such persons have no system of 'ultimate values' - a religion, even, in some sense; part of Mr Kirk's 'magic' may have lain in his ability to activate such 'value systems' for quite a proportion of the population.⁶⁶

The sense of Kirk as a 'Big New Zealander', with a compassionate concern for people, is what in retrospect emerges, and this in itself may have a civil religious flavour to it. He was a big man physically, the youngest Prime Minister ever, and had risen from a lowly background

64 Vowles, J. 'The Norman Kirk Legacy' (New Zealand Listener, Aug. 24-30, 1985) p. 23.

65 "Mr Kirk frequently invokes phrases like 'national interest' e.g. during the Springbox controversy. He doesn't hesitate to speak of idealism, moral value and purpose. But he consistently avoids wrapping those sentiments in the cloak of civil religion" (Levett, A. New Zealand Methodist, Oct. 18, 1973, p. 7).

66 Brown, C. 'The Ecumenical Contribution' (Religion in New Zealand Society, eds. B. Colless and P. Donovan) p. 92.

to the highest office in the land. These more tangible aspects of his life may explain Norman Kirk's 'magic' more successfully than any other factors.

WAITANGI OR NEW ZEALAND DAY

Several commentators have pointed to Waitangi Day as an example of where the practice of a civil religion might emerge. It is New Zealand's National Day, a public holiday (when it does not fall on a weekend), and a joining of two races in racial harmony, integrating the Maori culture with western values. A ceremony takes place on the Waitangi Estate, on the 6th February usually in the presence of the Governor-General, the Prime Minister and important government officials. Local and national Maori leaders will be present and various church officials will participate in the ceremony and speeches.

Apart from the ceremony itself Waitangi Day is not widely celebrated. In 1985 there was a direct radio broadcast from 10.20 - 11.30 and TV news coverage that evening on the 6.30 News. On the day after (the 7th) the television programme Te Karere devoted a special programme to Waitangi issues.⁶⁷ 1985 was a quiet ceremony compared to previous years but the newspaper headlines still reflect the controversy: "Restrained protest for Sir David"⁶⁸, "Long Batons Drawn at Waitangi"⁶⁹, "Maori Activists suit no

67 Listener, 2-8 Feb. 1985 pp. 83-87.

68 The Press, 6th Feb., 1985, p. 4.

69 The Star, 6 Feb., 1985, p. 1.

one but themselves"⁷⁰, "Protesters Noisy at Waitangi"⁷¹.

In this year some 1500 people were present at Waitangi, with perhaps 300 protesters. At Okains Bay (Christchurch) where a regional celebration of Waitangi Day took place, there were about 800 people present and a protest group of approximately one hundred. There was another small protest of a hundred people in Aotea Square, Auckland, on the same day, and a Waitangi Reception at the Beehive which the Prime Minister attended and addressed. Ironically, both those in favour of celebrating Waitangi Day in its established way, and those against, were both admitting to the significance of the day but sharply disagreeing over its meaning.

It is curious that the day was not formally turned into a national day of thanksgiving till 1960 and not made a full public holiday till 1973. There were also problems about its name. Under the Nash government of 1960 it was designated Waitangi Day, but the Kirk government changed the title and made it a public holiday called New Zealand Day. Henry May (Labour), then Minister of Internal Affairs commented that it is:

... more important to name the day New Zealand Day, thereby stressing the concept of nationhood.⁷²

A. Highet (National) said:

I prefer to call our national day New Zealand Day because unfortunately, Waitangi Day has over recent

70 The Star, 6 Feb., 1985, p. 8.

71 The Press, 7 Feb., 1985, p. 1.

72 May, H.L.C. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, vl.385 (1973) p. 2887.

years become an occasion for airing Maori discontent...⁷³

In 1976 the National government altered back the name to Waitangi Day. A. Highet (National), now Minister of Internal Affairs, said: "It is the ideals of the Treaty of Waitangi, and the spirit in which it was signed, that we wish to remember and preserve in our society - the spirit of mutual trust, and the desire for the peaceful resolution of our problems".⁷⁴ The Labour Opposition Member A. Faulkner did not agree with the alteration of name and remarked: "I am proud to be a New Zealander and I think the name should remain New Zealand Day, because this provided for not only Maoris and Europeans but for all the ethnic groups in New Zealand who work together in the spirit of the treaty."⁷⁵

All parties agreed that the day should not be 'mondayised'; that it should be kept a public holiday regardless of what day it fell on. To make it an automatic public holiday, would, it was generally felt by Members, erode Waitangi Days' meaning'.

Of course much earlier than this it had been urged that the 6th of February should be given more significance. A.D. McKinlay in his book Waitangi: Seed of Nationhood (1934), although not specifically favouring a national

73 Highet, A. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, vl. 385 (1973) p. 2898.

74 Highet, A. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, vl. 405 (1976) p. 2273.

75 Faulkner, A. New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, vl. 404 (1976) p. 1372.

holiday, plainly wanted much more significance attributed to the day:

At such a time the Governor-General's gift of the Waitangi estate is most happily appropriate. Apart from its inspirational value to future generations, it will have rendered a great service to New Zealand if it leads our people back even momentarily to the shrine which is sacred to our birth. May they for a space stay there in contemplation, forgetting their narrow partisanships, and refreshing that sense of patriotism and national tradition which are the very life blood of an island people. Should this account provide the essential background for making such a pilgrimage, it will more than have fulfilled its purpose.⁷⁶

In 1968 one writer urged that the day be a full national holiday "equal with Anzac Day".⁷⁷ That this did not happen until 1974 suggests that Waitangi Day was never held in the esteem, of say, Anzac Day, which was granted full status only four years after the Gallipoli landings. This sluggishness in acknowledging Waitangi Day's importance was probably a result of the somewhat ambitious claims made for Waitangi Day as a day which unifies New Zealand's two major races. Clearly there has been dissent from this view, and in recent years the dissent has grown more vocal and even violent.

In 1983 the National Council of Churches published a booklet called What Happened at Waitangi 1983 which contained statements that criticised the Waitangi ceremonies for being just 'a piece of civil religion'. In four places the concept of civil or state religion is mentioned:

76 McKinlay, A.D. Waitangi: Seed of Nationhood (Auckland, Whitcombe & Tombs, 1933) p. 3.

77 Dewes, K.P. Waitangi Day; 1968: some food for thought (Wellington, K.P. Dewes, 1968) p. 3.

The State is asking the Church to declare God's pleasure by this act of civil religion.⁷⁷

... about a ceremony which strengthens an unjust historical settlement about the churches presence being just a piece of 'civil religion' seen to be assenting to our history in its mythic version and to the present shape and nature of New Zealand society.⁷⁸

Civic religion is alive, but under siege.⁷⁹

And lastly, in a letter written by the then Minister of Lands J. Elworthy to the N.C.C. complaining that Waitangi was described as:

a farce - a showpiece of state religion.⁸⁰

Clearly the protesters' view of civil religion is entirely negative, and whether or not they are correct in describing Waitangi Day commemorations as 'civil religion', they want no part of it. For them 'civil religion' is state manipulation, in which church people in moral conscience cannot take part. The National Council of Churches appears to share this view and in a letter of reply to the Minister points out that "... if an interdenominational church service is to be held then this is a matter for the churches not the state."⁸¹

The position of the Maori people in relationship to the Waitangi ceremony is crucial to the authority of the

77 What Happened at Waitangi 1983 (Auckland, Church and Society Commission of the National Council of Churches in New Zealand, 1983) p. 9.

78 Ibid., p. 18.

79 Ibid., p. 25.

80 Ibid., p. 56.

81 Ibid., p. 59.

occasion. So far it would seem that Maori participation in the ceremony throughout its history has been willing and generally favourable. But vocal protests from so-called Maori activists have arisen in recent years which threaten to undermine the authority of the celebrations.

This raises the important point that civil religion may not necessarily be useful to all classes in a society. Bellah's interpretation was largely optimistic but is comfortable only with those who have recognisably received the fruits of the State. One writer has said:

... the very poor and the minorities whose bounds are defined by the affluent and accepted classes have not been socialised to that natural sense of belongingness. Their God, if they do have a God, is not the God of that civil religion; and the cries to rally around the symbols of nationalism do not stir latent bonds for them.⁸²

W.J.Stuart made very similar observations in the New Zealand context when he suggested that the right of access to a civil religion would depend on one's economic and social power (refer to page 10 of this thesis). He went on further to say that minority, Maori, or Polynesian groups might feel alienated from such a 'civil' or 'secular' religion and would seek alternatives in other areas. He pointed to the growth of maori gangs as an example.⁸³

The idea of civil religion has travelled some distance to reach a point where it is used as criticism of the state. This is not the sense in which the term has been mostly used in the United States. Neither is it the

82 Neal, p. 106.

83 Stuart, pp. 86-91.

sense that civil religion is solely a matter organised by the state for its own purposes, but rather a sort of symbolic relationship between state, churches and people. The divisiveness shown in this 1983 booklet, between different groups of Maoris, different groups of churchmen, between state and church organisations, hardly helps to foster the image of a civil religion which is both unifying and sacred. Under Bellah's terms the protesters were using the term civil religion inappropriately, but the possibility that civil religion belongs more to the affluent and majority in society, as suggested by M.A. Neal and W.J. Stuart, should be seriously considered. With such a contrast in interpretation by the participants, it is likely in the foreseeable future that Waitangi Day will remain a source of conflict.

ANZAC DAY

Anzac Day is perhaps the most interesting of all our national day rituals. It had already been noticed as such by J. Harré in 1967⁸⁴ and described as a memorial cult for the dead, no doubt in conscious knowledge of a similar analysis offered by W. Lloyd Warner in 1953 of the American Memorial Day rituals. For some seventy years the Anzac tradition has held a strong, vibrant and lasting place in New Zealand society, and perhaps only in the last few years has there been evidence of a decline in the participation

84 Harré, J. 'To Be or Not To Be' (Landfall vl. 20 No. 1 March 1966) p. 41.

and importance of the ritual.

Even so, on Anzac Day 1985, there were some ten or so different radio and television programmes devoted to either a live coverage of the Anzac ceremonies or aspects of its wartime tradition. The National Radio commentator, Brian Clarke, remarked: "Anzac Day reminds us of the freedom we have to remember; something I for one will not forget".

Undoubtedly for some people the day is still a sacred one. There is still virtually none of the commercial exploitation that one associates with other 'holy' days such as Christmas or Easter. The very word 'Anzac' was protected by an Order in Council as early as 1916⁸⁵ and for that reason the name has remained almost uniquely untarnished. The only exception to come to this author's knowledge is a type of biscuit recipe in the Edmond's cookbook.⁸⁶

Here surely, on Anzac Day, if there is a civil religious tradition in New Zealand, this is where we would find it. The elements of 'sacrifice' and 'rebirth' of a nation are a secular parallel to the Christian ideal.

85 Order in Council, 1916, 31st August New Zealand Gazette p. 2893. Point raised initially in Parliament, 2 June 1916 New Zealand Parliamentary Debates vl. 175, p. 650.

86 Edmonds Cook Book. (T.J. Edmonds Ltd, De Luxe ed. 10th, 1969) p. 14. There are ways around the protected name of Anzac. An advert in The Press for Gardenway on 25th April has such lines as "Your mission, if you dare to accept it, is...to win the 'pre-winter clean-up' battle. Organise the troops sergeant-major", "Don't look weedy. Spruce up the troops, with Yates Turfix", and "Next assignment - the flower garden (Password please)". p. 3.

Maureen Sharpe in her thesis 'Anzac Day in New Zealand from 1916-1938' has these comments to make:

... the shock of the deaths at Gallipoli gave to the whole campaign a spirituality that would endure no criticism; to criticise would dishonour the dead. Similarly to keep faith with the dead, New Zealand had to appear united at home in an effort to win the war and later the peace. This myth of national courage and unity composed the heart of the ritual on Anzac Day.⁸⁷

The deaths of sons and husbands and friends were closer and more personal for many people than the death of Christ had become. By comparison with Anzac Day both Good Friday and Sunday were desecrated as mere holidays. Churches were filled to overflowing only on Anzac Day. The clergy often expressed the hope that other holy days in the year might be granted similar respect to that of the 25th. The people had, however, found comfort and hope in this day, benefits which apparently were lacking on other festivals.⁸⁸

It seemed right at the beginning of the Anzac commemorations that the returned soldiers wanted a particular type of service. They wanted a service similar to ones at the 'Front', a simple service, and did not want to be split up between different denominations. They also wanted the popular army chaplains present.

Generally speaking the New Zealand soldier was not religious and compulsory church parades did not endear the church in his mind. However those chaplains who were ready to risk their lives with the men, gained a lot of respect...and were welcomed by the returned servicemen at the early services.⁸⁹

The religious attitudes of the returned soldiers were quite an important matter for it set the mould to the

87 Sharpe, M. 'Anzac Day in New Zealand 1916-1939: attitudes to peace and war', M.A. thesis in History, (Auckland, University of Auckland, 1981) p. 15. At the time of writing I was not able to contact Maureen Sharpe for permission to use the following material from her thesis.

88 Ibid., p. 38

89 Ibid., p. 36.

type of ceremony which has largely remained unchanged to this day. Since the 1920's the most obvious features of change in the Anzac ceremony have been the addition of the Dawn Parade in 1939, and the slow reduction of any clear Christian content.

The Anzac Book was an extraordinary production, written and illustrated in 1915 by the men in the trenches of Gallipoli shortly before the evacuation. It contains very little in the way of religious references. Indeed, there are as many allusions to Greek mythology than Christian. A poem "Confessions of Faith"⁹⁰ is about friendship, and there is even a mild parody of the Bible in the "Book of Anzac Chronicles"⁹¹ which contains such chapter headings as "The Flood", "The Book of Jobs" and "The Perfectly True Parable of the Seven Egyptians". Most references to God are colloquial or slang: "struth", "gawd", "Blime", "Gor Blime", except for the occasional correct use when employed in poems.⁹² Christianity and the work of the chaplains receives little attention except in a passage by the writer Hector Dining which conveys the mood of the time quite poignantly:

Informal parades for Divine Service are held on Sabbath afternoons for such men as are off duty. Attendances are scanty. The late afternoons are becoming bleak; men relieved from labour seek the warmth of their

90 The Anzac Book: written and illustrated in Gallipoli by the Men of Anzac (Melbourne, Sun Books reprint, 1976: first published 1916) p. 59.

91 Ibid., pp. 135-138.

92 Ibid., p. 73, p. 23, p. 32, p. 48. 'Struth' is slang for 'Gods Truth'; 'Blime' and 'Gor Blime' for 'God blind me'.

dugouts. The chaplain stands where he can find a level area and awaits a congregation. When two or three are gathered together he announces a hymn. The voices go up in feeble unison, punctuated by the roar of artillery, and the crackle of rifle fire. The prayers are offered. The address is short and shorn of cant. There is no place for canting formula. Reality is very grim all round...the chaplains have come out to do their work simply and laboriously. They are direct-minded, purposeful men... He sees his duty with a direct gaze - a faithful Christian at work in the throes of war.⁹³

Another source about what the average Anzac might think in regard to religious matters is to be found in two very popular books of poetry written by the so-called Anzac laureate C.J. Dennis. The Moods of Ginger Mick and Digger Smith were immensely successful both in Australia and New Zealand. Ginger Mick sold 64,000 copies by 1918, and Digger Smith had sold 25,000 copies by 1920. A pocket edition for the trenches was produced of Ginger Mick.⁹⁴ In both books strict Christian references are absent. God is usually 'gawd' or 'gawstruth', as much a colloquial expression than a religious sentiment, as this verse indicates:

Wot for? Gawstruth! 'E was no patriot
That sits 'un brays advice in days of strife;
'E never flapped no flags nor sich like rot;
'E never sung "Gawsave" in all 'is life.
'E was despised be them that makes sich noise;
But now - O strike! - 'E's "one uv our brave boys".⁹⁵

The whole character of Ginger Mick is portrayed as someone loving a fight, indifferent to patriotism, noble in

93 The Anzac Book, p. 21.

94 All the information on publishing figures was obtained from 'The Anzac Tradition' K.S. Inglis, Meanjin Quarterly vl. 24 1965 (pp. 25-44).

95 Denis, C.J. The Moods of Ginger Mick (Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1918) p. 30.

an ordinary, earthy way and sceptical of the war. The character of Ginger Mick died at Gallipoli but in the second book Digger Smith portrays the ex-Anzac returning, with all the difficulties of adjustment this meant. One whole poem in Digger Smith is devoted to what the war experience meant to those that suffered it. This poem, 'West' tackles the religious aspect of a returned soldier without any particular Christian reference. One verse says:

"I ain't seen much uv God," said 'e;
 "Not 'ere nor Over There,
 but partly wot I've seen and read,
 An' partly wot the padre said,
 It gits me when I stare
 Out West when it's like that is now.
 There must be somethin' else - some'ow."⁹⁶

And in a later poem: "I got these thoughts Out There becos, We learnt wot mateship reely was",⁹⁷ which serves the suggestion that the returned soldiers were not looking for an elaborate Christianised ceremony but something that expressed the comradeship of life shared under dangerous conditions.

This point is emphasised again by K. Inglis's article 'Anzac and Christian - Two Traditions or One?' where he recounts the conflicts between the churches and the Australian Returned Services League over the content of the Anzac ceremony. He documents three parades, 1938, 1956 and 1965 where the Protestant churches protested at the reduction of Christian references in the services. The revised ceremony of 1938 is quite similar to the current

96 Digger Smith Dennis, C.J. (Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1920) p. 44.

97 Ibid., p. 103.

New Zealand ceremony of the 1980's.

It included the National Anthem, introductory remarks by the Acting Governor-General, 'Lead Kindly Light', an address by the President of the R.S.L. on 'Remembrance of the Fallen', 'Land of Hope and Glory', an address by a speaker to be chosen on 'The Spirit of Anzac Day', Kipling's 'Recessional', a recitation of the words 'Greater love hath no man than this: that a man lay down his life for a friend', two minutes of silent prayer, and then the Last Post, Reveille, and a band playing Schubert's March Militaire.⁹⁸

The Anglican archbishop of Melbourne protested that all the prayers had been left out and the remaining hymn did not contain any reference to God: "The suggested service would leave us only the two minutes silence, unrelieved by any reference to our Christian hope".⁹⁹ Needless to say the revised service carried the day. Similar conflicts arose at parades in 1956 and 1965 in New South Wales, and in both cases the R.S.L. won the day, reducing the clergy's role in the first and holding the Anzac ceremony on a Sunday morning on the second.¹⁰⁰

The point I wish to make, and which has been made by others, is that here within these ceremonies is something

98 Inglis, K.S. 'Anzac and Christian - Two Traditions or One?' (St Mark's Review, November 1965, No. 42) p. 3.

99 Ibid., p. 4.

100 Ibid., pp. 3-12. Maureen Sharpe's 1922 description of the 1922 Anzac Parade in Auckland gives a fair idea of what the original services were like and what must have been the Christian content. Bishops and chaplains (usually those that had been personally involved in the war) would give speeches; there were several hymns, 'For All The Saints', 'Oh God Our Help in Ages Past', 'All People That on Earth do Dwell' which refer to God; prayers were given; a Benediction; and then secondary services would continue in churches and cemeteries. Very few churches failed to hold some sort of service and these were very well attended, with the whole day passed over to a ritual of "purification and inspiration" (Sharpe, pp. 8-9).

unusual, something that is still present in the 1985 Anzac services. Not exactly a Christian service, yet neither is it secular; a ceremony usually held in close physical relation to church buildings yet not in them, and kept distinct from the church service that may be 'offered' after the Anzac commemoration; a ceremony where God is rarely mentioned and Christ not at all; a ceremony with much symbolism of its own which is deeply meaningful to the participants. It is no wonder that Anzac Day more than any other event is pointed to when the suggestion of a New Zealand civil religion is mentioned.

Yet it is also true that Anzac Day has declined in its significance and participation. Perhaps 100,000 people in Auckland alone participated in Anzac ceremonies in 1922. In 1985 in that city only 3,000 people were present at the Dawn Parade. This year in Christchurch about 3,000 people were at the Dawn Parade with a local televised audience in the city of 7,000 and a national audience of approximately 50,000.¹⁰¹ The Dawn Parade in Dunedin was broadcast on the National Programme and 1,500 people were present at the ceremony.

There were also television and radio programmes throughout the day, featuring mostly music and commentary on both the first and second world wars, but whether the audience watched them as participation or entertainment it is difficult to judge. At the Christchurch Dawn Parade there seemed a sharp distinction in my opinion between the 2,000

¹⁰¹ Figures supplied by Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand Audience Research Unit.

ex-servicemen and officials who participated and the 1,000 or so public who came to watch. And on the radio and television it seemed that there was as much the element of nostalgia in the programming as remembrance of the war dead.¹⁰²

Several reasons may be adduced for the decline of the Anzac tradition. First, it has built-in obsolescence. The numbers of ex-servicemen must inevitably fall and weaken the ranks of those who could personally remember: "grief, even deep and sincere, was a personal thing and could not in this day touch more than a steadily dwindling number of people. Grief on a national scale could not be felt for long".¹⁰³

The obvious military component of the ceremony has always caused difficulties and objections. As early as 1920 some clergy felt unable to participate for moral reasons¹⁰⁴ and by the 1970's antagonism had flared up when some groups laid wreaths commemorating the deaths of soldiers in Vietnam in the middle of the Anzac service. Others, more quietly, stayed away:

By 1970 New Zealanders who opposed the war in Vietnam found it difficult to participate in Anzac Day ceremonies even though they might genuinely

102 For example: 'Nola: Our Own New Zealand Girl', 'Songs for Anzac Day', 'The Tommy Handley Story', 'Make Love Not War: a musical tapestry inspired by or commemorating occasions in military history', 'Band of the Royal Regiment of New Zealand Artillery' (New Zealand Listener 20-26th April 1985, pp. 110-112).

103 Powles, Sir G. (Consultation on the Observance of Anzac Day, Church and Society Commission, Auckland, 1972) pp. 12-13.

104 Sharpe, p. 34.

want to commemorate those who died in past wars, because Anzac Day services are identified with the R.S.A. who actively favour New Zealand's involvement in Vietnam.¹⁰⁵

The Anzac Day Act 1966¹⁰⁶ lessened the sanctity of the day by permitting certain activities after 1 p.m. that would normally occur on a Saturday. In 1922 virtually everything was closed: shops, theatres, cinemas, sports grounds,¹⁰⁷ whereas today, theatres, cinemas, restaurants and race meetings can all take place on the 25th - something which in the early years of the tradition would have been considered an outrage. Anzac Day has become a holiday for most people rather than a 'holy day'.

Lastly, the Anzac ceremony has been traditionally a male ritual. Though this circumstance may have originally reflected the predominantly male involvement at Gallipoli and other First World War battlefields, it now no longer seems appropriate. Historically, the whole community of men, women and children would be involved in commemorating Anzac Day, even though the centre stage was held by the returned soldiers. The instigation of the Dawn Parade in some local centres in 1937 and nationally in 1939 tended to emphasise more the military and male component of the ceremony. As it was later commented:

105 Consultation on the Observance of Anzac Day (Auckland, Church and Society Commission, 1972) p. 14.

106 New Zealand Parliamentary Debates vl. 347 (1966) pp. 1588-1590 and vl. 349 (1966) pp. 2978-2996. This act amends the Anzac Day Act of 1949 which mainly confirmed Anzac Day to be observed as a Sunday and allowed for commemoration of the war-dead from the Second World War.

107 Sharpe, p. 1.

The Dawn Parade was a ceremony essentially for the returned servicemen. There was no way in which the civilian onlookers could participate. Nor could he hope to experience the emotion of the men who marched. The struggle against the cold and the dark of a late April morning somehow symbolised the hardships and danger of the battlefields.¹⁰⁸

At the Christchurch Dawn Parade of 1985 virtually no women were present amongst the formal marchers, speakers and wreath layers, though of the 1,000 or so public gathered possibly quarter were female and perhaps 50 or so children. How many women participate 'silently', through watching or listening to commemorative programmes on TV or radio, or who give a donation for a Poppy, would be difficult to estimate.¹⁰⁹

The 'maleness' of the Anzac ritual raises a question over how accurately it can be accommodated into a civil religious tradition that is supposed to appeal to an entire population. It may be that the Anzac tradition can be identified with the current of a male-mythology that appears to run broadly through New Zealand society.

OTHER NEW ZEALAND STATE RITUALS

There are several other official days in the state calendar which deserve attention: Dominion Day 24th September, Commonwealth Day 2nd Monday in March (formerly Empire Day, 24th May), and Remembrance Sunday (formerly

108 Consultation on the Observance of Anzac Day (Auckland, Church and Society Commission, 1972) p. 11.

109 In Dunedin, on 1985 Anzac Day, members of the Girl Guides Association laid wreaths on appropriate graves in some cemeteries.

Armistice Day) the Sunday closest to November 11th.

Dominion Day was the anniversary of the proclamation of New Zealand as a self-governing colony, as a Dominion, on September 26, 1907. Even as early as 1917 only a partial observance of the holiday was made:

Flags were flown from the Government, municipal and many other buildings, and the banks, Government, and law and insurance offices were closed. The majority of business places, however, remained open. There were no holiday fixtures, though many people took advantage of the fine weather, and made excursions to Sumner and New Brighton, or picnicked in Hagley Park.

The main celebration of the day took place in the primary schools, where at the instance of the Education Board, the scholars were assembled during the morning to listen to brief addresses explanatory of the day and its meaning, and to also perform the ceremony of saluting the flag.¹¹⁰

In 1922 one writer criticised the continuation of Dominion Day and suggested there was no excuse for keeping it "when its sterility is compared with the pregnancy of Anzac Day as the expression of national emotions and aspirations".¹¹¹

In 1923 Dominion Day ceased to be a public holiday for public servants, in 1946 it ceased to be a bank holiday and by 1955 it was no longer included in the list of public holidays. The Press noted in 1959 that "in the fifty-two years since the proclamation Dominion Day observance has gradually fallen into neglect."¹¹² New Zealand legally ceased to be a Dominion in 1947 and by 1959 only the Stock Exchange still observed a holiday. The day still receives

110 The Press, 25th September 1917, p. 8.

111 Sharpe, p. 5.

112 The Press, 28th September 1959, p. 17.

the occasional reference to it on some calendars.¹¹³

Empire Day was traditionally celebrated on the 24th May, Queen Victoria's Birthday. As early as 1914 a Col. Andrews addressing Cashmere School "bemoans the falling off of celebrations"¹¹⁴. An Empire Sunday service was held in Christchurch Anglican cathedral on the 22nd April 1955.

The speaker was the Dean of Christchurch. The Press reported:

The ordinary citizen of the Empire must feel his duty and hold it in his hands, Dean Sullivan said. Everyone must put all his weight into the task of purifying and enobling the nation, take his citizenship seriously, and stand loyally to the best values now; he must do a day's work faithfully and fully, and put pleasure in its proper place... All that means a rebirth of strength and the best kind of defense against all manner of evil. If we stand together like that we can be blown to bits but we can never be destroyed... I believe we are gathered here to think of the British Empire as it is in the face of God.¹¹⁵

An Empire Day Service was also held in the cathedral in May 1958 but there was no record in the paper of any address given.¹¹⁶ In 1959 Empire Day was renamed Commonwealth Day and continued to be observed on the 24th May until 1966 when it began to be observed on the Queen's Official Birthday. This arrangement lasted ten years. In 1976 the observance of Commonwealth Day for all member countries was moved to the second Monday in March, a day on which none of the countries had any official day. As a national day of commemoration the New Zealand flag should

113 Whitcoulls 1985 Calendar.

114 The Press, 4th June 1914, p. 14.

115 The Press, 23rd May 1955, p. 12.

116 The Press, 21st May 1958, p. 15.

be flown from all Government buildings. Commonwealth Societies also celebrate the day, these celebrations usually taking the form of an ecumenical or multi-faith church services on the Sunday immediately before Commonwealth Day. It is usual for the Queen's Commonwealth Message to be read at the church service and in Wellington this function is usually carried out by a Minister of the Crown. The Minister of Education may publish a message in the Education Gazette encouraging teachers to observe the day by teaching something related to the Commonwealth.

Remembrance Sunday evolved out of Armistice Day which was inaugurated by telegram from the Secretary of State to the Colonies to the Governor-General of New Zealand:

Please inform your ministers that His Majesty the King has expressed the wish that on Armistice Day 11th November there should be a complete suspension of normal business throughout the British Empire during two minutes silence commencing at eleven a.m.¹¹⁷

This day was accepted much more readily than either Dominion or Empire Day as this account in 1931 indicates:

With flags at half-mast, throngs of people in the Square standing still with heads bowed, all traffic throughout the City stationary, and a detachment of sailors and marines from H.M.S. Diomedé with arms reversed, the observance of the two minutes silence in Christchurch yesterday made a simple, reverent and impressive ceremony. Though similar lines have been followed through the years in honouring the fallen on the anniversary of the Armistice, there was no sign that any of those present felt the importance of the ceremony less acutely because it has so often been repeated... As the Post Office clock struck the hour a single salute was fired from Hagley Park, and sirens sounded. The naval men

117 New Zealand Parliamentary Debates vl. 191 (1919)
p. 923.

received the command "Rest on arms reversed", hats were removed and traffic came to a stop. Flags that had been at mast-heads on buildings about the city came to half-mast. For a while there was a subdued occasional sound from further parts of the city and that too then died away, and there was absolute silence.¹¹⁸

Armistice Day altered its name to Remembrance Sunday and was removed to the closest Sunday to November 11th.

In 1984 November 11th fell on a Sunday but no direct reference to it was made in either of the two Christchurch dailies. 'Security Screen for Royal Family'¹¹⁹ mentioned Remembrance Sunday in England in the context of the security set up as the Royal Family attended special services. In Christchurch there was a morning service in the Cathedral at 11.00 a.m. which was broadcast live on the National programme of Radio New Zealand. Flags on government buildings are officially lowered for the customary two minutes past 11.00 a.m. and apart from a notice placed by the Department of Internal Affairs in the Gazette for early November drawing attention to the day, "no other official action is taken".¹²⁰

New Zealand has two National Anthems, 'God Defend the Queen' which is now usually played only when members of the Royal Family are present, and 'God Defend New Zealand', written by Thomas Bracken in 1875 and officially adopted in 1940, and has since become the more used of the two (note the 1984 Olympic Games). The National Anthem is

118 The Press, November 12th 1931, p. 12.

119 The Star, November 12th, 1984, p. 6.

120 Letter, Dept. Internal Affairs 9th July 1985. Held by author. Gazette, p.3639 No. 183, 3 November 1983. No notice was published in 1984. Refer to Appendix I for text of notice.

still played on international test occasions in rugby football and occasionally at important provincial or Ranfurly Shield matches, but has ceased in theatres and cinemas.

The author of 'God Defend New Zealand', Thomas Bracken (1843-1898) also published a poem titled 'God's Own Country',¹²¹ which has become a popular colloquial expression in New Zealand up to the present day. Bracken was not the originator of the expression but set it to ballad-like effect in his poem which was taken up notably by Richard 'King Dick' Seddon, who popularised the expression throughout his premiership. The modern spelling of the expression is frequently 'Godzone', and the word is used alternatively with affection, pride or derision.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER II

Before bringing this chapter on evidence to a close it will be useful to sum up the overall results.

A general decline of public observance has been evident throughout occasions such as Anzac Day, Remembrance Sunday, Dominion Day and Empire Day. Waitangi Day participation is small. Other rituals have apparently remained fixed with no increase or decrease in expression such as the prayer in Parliament (the same since 1962) and the expression "divine guidance" in the Governor-General's Speech from the Throne (the same since 1972).

121 Bracken, T. Not Understood (Wellington, Gordon & Gotch, 1905) pp. 9-14.

If any pattern is observable in speeches by politicians, expressions of religious content in memoirs, and political manifestos, it is that religious expressions have almost entirely disappeared from the public arena. National anthems are no longer played in cinemas and theatres.

One idea of interest that does emerge from the evidence is that there may be a much stronger case to make for a civil religion existing at an earlier period in New Zealand history, particularly from the end of the First World War to that of the Second, say from 1919-1945.

The Anzac ceremony began at the end of the First World War and was at the height of its popularity during the 1920's. Many schools had ceremonies, such as Saluting the Flag, during this period, and teachers might be asked to take an Oath of Allegiance to the King, "before God". Michael Joseph Savage was Prime Minister from 1935-40, and was notable for his frequent expression of Christian principles. Dominion Day was still being celebrated in 1917 though its observance was already declining. The same is true of Empire Day. Armistice Day was still almost universally acknowledged during the thirties, and it was during this time, also the height of the Depression, that the Government asked the churches to organise "national days of prayer" for the unemployed - surely something unlikely to happen today?

How much of this activity might be called 'civil religion', or separated from the usual Christian activities of the time, is not easy to determine. It may be adequate to identify these sorts of activities during this period (1919-1945) simply as 'Christian', or 'patriotism'.

CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION

The Bible is still the best explanation of the New Zealand way of thinking...the cast and colour of our minds...

(Oliver Duff, New Zealand Now, p. 122.)

Chapter I introduced the topic of civil religion, looked at its history, and arrived at a working area of study. Chapter II considered the evidence available under that definition. Chapter III will consider more general matters and problems arising out of the evidence. Specifically it will ask: 1) is there a civil religion in New Zealand?; 2) why has civil religion emerged as a concept?; and 3) what might be the effects of adopting the concept? Naturally, these three questions are inter-related to each other.

1) Is there a civil religion in New Zealand?

Firstly, in order to answer this question we have to decide what phenomena we wish to regard as civil religion, rather than say, 'folk religion' or the more usual forms of religious practice. Secondly, we have to be sure that the sort of evidence we have been talking about (Anzac Day, Waitangi Day, Governor-General's speeches, political addresses, prayers in parliament, Speech from the Throne, and so forth) is linked in some subtle and possibly non-explicit way. Thirdly, and this may be the heart of the matter, we have to decide whether any of these perceived links are special and *different* from the usual religious practices in New Zealand society. Can these phenomena be described with existing terms or are we obliged to adopt a thoroughly new description?

The use of terms in this whole debate is a thorny one. Terms like 'civil religion' or 'folk religion' or 'religion of patriotism' (all used by Colless and Donovan in their

introduction) have to stretch over a wide range of phenomena, the edges of which tend to overlap. The relationship between the phenomena is sometimes unclear, and there may be differences in the description of these phenomena.

The use of a new term such as 'civil religion' may be valuable, or it may 'lead' the evidence into a false coherence. It should be the body of evidence indicated by the concept that attracts our interest, rather than the term itself. Does the evidence cohere? Is there enough of it? Is it clearly separable from other sorts of evidence?

The terms of study, as stated in Chapter I (pp. 12-13) fall between two definitions of civil religion. The first, offered by Robert Bellah, was in part that civil religion "... has its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and sacred places, its own solemn rituals and symbols. It is concerned that America be a society as perfectly in accord with the will of God as men can make it, and a light to all nations".¹ The second definition by Colless and Donovan stated that "Civil religion refers to the way a state or nation, in its laws and practices and official functions, uses forms of words, rites and ceremonies evoking emotions and expressing commitments very similar to those associated with religious attitudes and behaviour".²

One would have to say initially that within the terms selected for study, the evidence looked at so far is rather thin. For example, J. Veitch suggested the idea that a civil religion is practised in New Zealand and pointed

1. Bellah, pp. 40-41.

2. Colless and Donovan, p. 11.

specifically to prayers in parliament, declarations on oath, Anzac Day, Waitangi celebrations, the National Song (and National Anthem), and unofficial political party church services.³ If we consider these one by one we might wonder how many of these can be placed together comfortably. The prayer in Parliament has been the same since 1962 and Parliament itself meets approximately six months a year; declarations on oath need not be on the Bible and can be made as a simple affirmation of speaking the truth; participation in Anzac Day celebrations has declined markedly since the Second World War; Waitangi Day is associated in the public mind as much with protest as unity, and there is a low public participation in the commemorations; both National Anthems are less played; and the "space allowed for the religious elements" in the political arena is so small as to be negligible.

If one were to construct a calendar of State religion it would look something like this:

- 6 Feb Waitangi Day
- Mar Commonwealth Day (formerly Empire Day)
- 25 Apr Anzac Day
- Opening of Parliament
- 3 Jun Queen's Birthday
- 26 Sep Dominion Day
- 11 Nov Remembrance Sunday (formerly Armistice Day)

Neither Dominion Day, Commonwealth Day nor the Opening of Parliament are public holidays. Only Queen's Birthday is always a full public holiday regardless of the day it falls on. Only Anzac Day, Waitangi Day and the formal Opening of Parliament receive widespread media attention and discussion. The public participation in the

3. Veitch, p. 141.

celebration of days such as Dominion Day, Commonwealth Day, Queen's Birthday and Remembrance Sunday is small, especially when compared with other popular days. Mothers Day (2nd Sunday in May), April Fools Day (1st April), Guy Fawkes Day (5th November), Valentines Day (14th February), and Hiroshima Day (6th August) all receive a good deal of attention and public participation. Many of these days are obviously buoyed up in popularity by their strong commercial potential, though Mothers' Day and Hiroshima Day in particular seem to genuinely attract a sincere acknowledgement of their significance.

On Hiroshima Day in 1985 there were world-wide celebrations and demonstrations. One minute silences were observed locally, by groups of people both in the Christchurch City Square and the New Brighton Mall, and various peace groups and schools organised local activities on the day. There was a prominent involvement of women and children in these activities. Nationally, Hiroshima Day events were organised in all the main four centres of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin, with speeches, poetry readings, vigils, telephone link-ups to Hiroshima, films and a poster competition.⁴ There was a full coverage in the local and national media of these events and the significance they portrayed. In none of these activities did the State play any obvious role.

Another way of considering the value of the evidence pertaining to civil religion might be to 'try out' an analogy using Robert Bellah's suggestions that civil religion

4. The Press, 7th August 1985, pp. 1, 8, 10, 12, 22, 26.

may have its own prophets, martyrs, sacred events, sacred places, solemn rituals and symbols.⁵ Can a similar analogy be drawn using New Zealand examples? For instance:

prophets : Michael Joseph Savage, Norman Kirk

martyrs : men of Gallipoli

sacred events : landings at Gallipoli, rugby test
matches

sacred places : Gallipoli, Waitangi

solemn rituals : Anzac Day, Waitangi Day, Opening of
Parliament

symbols : 'All Black', poppy, silver fern,
koru, kiwi

Under these, admittedly superficial, analogies, there does seem a correspondence of terms. Perhaps the rugby test occasions are forcing the idea of a sacred event somewhat, and the list of symbols hardly appears profound, yet 'prophet' for Savage and Kirk may seem apt, as might also the description of 'martyr' for the dead soldiers at Gallipoli. But the predominance of Anzac symbols and occasions in the list of comparisons adds more force to the argument that it is the Anzac tradition above all that gives depth and plausibility to the concept of a civil religion.

The last question I wish to raise in this section is whether any of the perceived links in a civil religion cannot be described in any other way. This point arises partly out of the variety of terms used to describe 'civil religion'. In Chapter I some of these were listed (p. 5). More particularly it may well be possible to analyse many of

5. Bellah, pp. 40-41.

the elements already being considered under more usual terms without any recourse to something new.

For instance, R. Openshaw, in his thesis 'Patriotism and the New Zealand Primary School', uses secular terms entirely, like 'nationalism' and 'patriotism' to describe such rituals as Saluting the Flag and Anzac Day ceremonies that were held in schools.⁶ In 1921, T.B. Strong, the then Chief Inspector of Primary Schools, wrote a guide for schools entitled, 'The Inculcation of Patriotism',⁷ in which he suggested various ceremonies for improving patriotic sentiment amongst schoolchildren.

In Strong's proposed 'Assembly Programme', there was an introductory pledge and salute by a single boy: 'Our King inspires loyalty and devotion to our country and its laws because he rules by consent of the people. God Save the King'; followed by the National Anthem; a Boy's Voice solo; a children's pledge to the 'mother land'; a Children's Song 'Sons of the Motherland'; another solo child's voice: 'As we hope to grow into citizens good and true, we every day declare what we are willing to undertake for the sake of God, our neighbours, and ourselves'; the Children's Declaration, which begins with the line: 'I love God and my country'; a chorus of Land of Hope and Glory; a Girl's Voice pledge and finally a hymn: 'Father in Heaven who lovest all, O help Thy children when they call'. There were to be other

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6. Openshaw, R. 'Patriotism and the New Zealand Primary School', D.Phil. (thesis) Hamilton, University of Waikato, 1978. Permission kindly given for use of this thesis.
 7. Ibid, pp. 257-263. At the time of writing this thesis it was not known whether parts, or any, of these ceremonies were actually introduced into school assemblies.

special ceremonies for Anzac Day and Empire Day. Such activities we might today consider constitutes a 'civil religion'.

Another way of describing 'civil religious' evidence may be to employ some sort of variant on a Christian description, to indicate that the similarities to the Christian tradition are more dominant than any new elements. One such term suggested has been 'domesticated Christianity':

The New Zealand brand of pluralism, it appears, tolerates and advocates religious diversity - so long, that is, as religions are *domesticated*, according to a common set of values, a shared view of what counts as needful for the good of all.⁸

... the *domesticated* Christianity which surfaces at Anzac Day, Waitangi Day and the annual meetings of a surprisingly wide range of groups.⁹

By 'domesticated' I understand both writers to mean simply the idea of a national, undemanding faith, suitable for family and home, and altogether non-controversial. Obviously, such a usage of the Christian faith, as a basis of values and as a standard against which to judge behaviour and belief is still a most important one in a Christian society such as New Zealand, where our culture, thoughts and actions are modelled on 'proper' Christian behaviour. Whether this 'conformity Christianity' is really something different that deserves a completely new title such as 'civil religion' is difficult to say, but it is clear that the ambiguity of the religious position of many modern

8. Donovan, P. 'The Illusion of Diversity in New Zealand Beliefs' Religion in New Zealand eds. C. Nichol and J. Veitch (Wellington, Tertiary Christian Studies Programme, 1980) p. 182. Itals. mine.

9. Brown, 'Religion in New Zealand: Past, Present and Future', p. 19. Itals. mine.

New Zealand individuals leads to similar ambiguity over the choice of terms used to describe their position.

2) Why has civil religion emerged as a concept?

In questioning the strength and extent of the evidence for a 'civil religion' in New Zealand, it becomes pertinent to ask why the concept has received such popular advocacy in recent years. Some suggestions offered here consider other factors which may account for civil religion being taken seriously as a genuine area of study.

A brief glance at religious census statistics for recent years shows some prominent changes in stated religious adherence.¹⁰ The statistics can be broadly divided into two main periods: from 1935-66, and from 1966-81. In the 1935-66 period the changes in religious adherence were mostly gradual. The proportion of Church of England (Anglican) adherents declined from 40.78% to 33.7% over the period. Both Methodist and Presbyterian numbers showed similar slow reductions, whereas the number of adherents of the Roman Catholic church slowly increased over the period. The only 'dramatic' movement was between the census figures of 1935-45 where those who 'Object to State' their religious beliefs rose around 3%.

The 1935-66 period covers 31 years; the 1966-81 period covers 15 years. The second period witnessed rapid changes in two particular areas. Those people who 'Object to State' increased from 7.9% in 1966 to 14.9% in 1981, an

10. All figures taken from New Zealand Year Books 1938-81. Wellington, Department of Statistics.

increase of 7%, or almost double in 15 years. Equally as dramatic was the increased percentage of those who stated they had 'No Religion' (so returned or not specified) - from 1.22% to 8.7% in 1981. All remaining mainline Protestant churches showed a steady decline and for the first time since 1935 the Catholic Church showed a slight decline from a 1966 peak of 15.9% to 14.4% in 1981. (Refer Appendix II for graph on statistical change.)

However one likes to interpret census statistics there does seem to be a sharply growing proportion of New Zealanders who are reluctant about, or uninterested in stating, their religious beliefs. Some 23% (or about 740,000 people) is a large proportion of the population about which nothing regarding religious adherence can be clearly said. This vacuum of belief offers a challenge to scholars and observers to explain or fill, and may have contributed to a growing interest in studying less traditionally observed religious beliefs.

It is curious that most of the descriptions and suggestions about a civil religion (or other such phenomena) have emerged from the professional and academic disciplines.

It is worth noting in conclusion, that Thomas and Flippen (1972) in their empirical study of American civil religion, found little direct evidence that such a phenomenon existed in reality. In fact they concluded: "Perhaps all of this indicates that a well-defined thesis of civil religion may be more the creation (and fantasy) of the liberal, political and intellectual elite than active faith amongst the masses".¹¹

11. Glasner, P.E. 'The Study of Australian folk religion: some theoretical and practical problems'. Practice and Belief: Studies in Society, eds. A.W. Black and P.E. Glasner (Sydney, George Allen and Unwin, 1983) p. 177 and p. 180.

An aspect of this debate that has not been satisfactorily faced is the position or 'bias' of the professional observer. It is worth wondering whether the discipline of 'religious studies' does not tempt us into imposing religious patterns and shapes on the society that is observed simply because we are bound by our own tradition to study *religious* phenomena.

For instance, as Richey and Jones noted, the 1960's in American sociology 'rediscovered' an interest in the broader function of religion in society through the works of Weber and Durkheim, and Bellah's original 1967 article on civil religion was a part of that current sociological movement. Durkheim considered that most people's God, is the society that nurtured them, and as M.A. Neal pointed out, civil religion names the link in that relationship between society and it's religious experience.

3) What might be the effects of adopting the concept of civil religion?

Accepting such notions as civil religion broadens the scope of inquiry into the religious practices of New Zealanders quite considerably. Once it is considered valid to examine forms of religious activity outside of church practices, then the potential range of 'non-church' religious activity is large. Colless and Donovan suggest in their introduction that we would have to take seriously such ideas as folk religion,¹² which includes such things as sporting cults and nature protection movements. And what of

12. Colless and Donovan, p. 12.

activities which may not be conveniently categorised under terms such as 'civil' or 'folk'. In this regard one thinks of certain political parties, of women's movements and of the ecumenical movement.

To explore the larger implications of a civil religious concept three particular areas of New Zealand life will be briefly examined: rugby (or sporting activities); the ecumenical movement; and a conservation group, the Native Forests Action Council. These will be examined to see whether there is potential within the function of these areas for them to be related to religious-like activities, and whether any demonstrable connections can be made between these three areas of New Zealand life and the concept of a civil religion.

Rugby and Sport

Rugby has always been a contender for some sort of ritualistic description with its passionate supporters, emblems of 'All Black' and silver fern, and the ritual haka and National Anthem on big test occasions.

It is sometimes said in jest that rugby in New Zealand is 'like a religion', and this may be truer than it seems. For there are few symbols of national unity as important as the All Blacks and there are few rituals as faithfully observed as 'listening to the Test' even when this involves a vigil in the early hours of an antipodean morning.¹³

John Mulgan, in his book Report on Experience, gives a very eloquent description of rugby in the national consciousness. This is in 1947:

Rugby football was the best of all our pleasures: it was religion and desire and fulfilment all in one. Most New Zealanders can look back on some game which

13. Harré, J. and Jackson, K. New Zealand, p. 168.

they played to win and whose issues seemed to them a good deal more important than a lot that has happened since. The phenomenon is greatly deprecated by a lot of thinkers who feel that an exaggerated attention to games gives the young a wrong sense of values. This may well be true, and if it is true, the majority of New Zealanders have a wrong sense of values for the whole of their lives. But to be frank, and since we live in a hard world, and one that has certainly not in my time got any softer, I found in war-time that there was considerable virtue in men who had played games like professionals to win, and not, like public-school boys, and amateurs for exercise. So that perhaps it would be more correct to say that the virtues and values of the New Zealanders were not so much wrong as primitive, and to this extent useful in the current collapse of civilisation.¹⁴

Notice how Mulgan refers to 'most New Zealanders' - he means of course males - and notice too his use of the word 'primitive'. There was much in the antagonism that flared up in the Springbok tour controversies of 1981 and 1985 that was the result of different values developing since the time Mulgan was writing. The enormous popularity of a play such as Foreskin's Lament by Greg McGee shows how deeply rugby dwells in the New Zealand consciousness.

Mulgan relates the sport to its usefulness in war, a relationship that has had long been expounded in New Zealand. Jock Phillips in his 1984 article 'Rugby, War and the Mythology of the New Zealand Male',¹⁵ and Len Richardson in 'Rugby, Race and Empire: the 1905 All Black Tour',¹⁶

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14. Mulgan, J. Report on Experience (Auckland, Blackwood and Janet Paul Ltd, 1947) p. 7.
 15. Phillips, J.O. 'Rugby, War and the Mythology of the New Zealand Male' New Zealand Journal of History, vl. 18 No. 2, pp. 83-103.
 16. Richardson, L. 'Rugby, Race, and Empire: the 1905 All Black Tour', Historical News, No. 47 Dec. 1983 (University of Canterbury) pp. 1-6.

explored the relationship of maleness, sport (especially rugby), and New Zealanders' prowess in war. When one considers that these traits of maleness and militarism are also central to one of the dominant rituals of civil religion - the Anzac tradition - it is possible to perceive that there may be complicated and subtle links between sport and the concept of a civil religion.

A striking example of such a possibility might be this extract, taken from a booklet by Michael Joseph Savage called A Clarion Call, in which the then Prime Minister attempts to persuade more male New Zealanders to join the forces voluntarily rather than introduce the 'shame' of conscription.

To all New Zealanders who can play football, cricket, hockey, baseball, tennis, who love swimming, boxing, wrestling, and every other strenuous exercise and act I say tonight - and would to God that I did not have to say it - the time has now come for men to fight. Throughout the Empire yesterday's sportsmen are today's warriors. Men who have worn the jersey of the 'All Blacks' and the blazer of the New Zealand Eleven - men who have led them - captains courageous - are now wearing khaki! We are proud of them. Where they lead will others hesitate to follow? I think not.¹⁷

If one includes rugby as part of the wider activity of sport then there is a considerable number of potential 'religions'.

If, as Paul Tillich claims, "religion is the subject of man's ultimate concern" then unquestionably sport is the religion of many New Zealanders. It fulfills the psychological need to prevent existential nausea and provides a purpose for living.¹⁸

17. Savage, M.J. A Clarion Call (Wellington, Government Printer, 1940) p. 5.

18. Hinchcliff, J.C. 'A Perspective on the Religio-Ethical Dimensions of Sport, The Religious Dimension: Colloquium on Religious Studies (Auckland, University of Auckland, 1975) p. 97.

Sport can be a day's fishing in a deserted trout-stream without a catch, a lonely long distance run, or a climb in the mountains. In such playful activities the mind and body seem to unite with the environment. Sometimes an extravertive mystical experience may occur where the participant totally transcends selfish pleasure and becomes thoroughly steeped in creation.¹⁹

If one wanted to establish a link with sport to a civil religion one could point to the way a prominent politician may attend a test match (as a member of the Royal Family always attends the Football Association Cup Final in England), or send a telegram of congratulations to winners or medal gainers at Olympic Games. Athletes in important competitions represent the State, and the national anthem may be played if they achieve final success. On the other hand, sporting interests have sometimes conflicted with civil religious ceremonies. The 1966 Anzac Day Act removed certain constraints so that sports and race meetings could be held on that day. In participation terms, sport engages a huge number of New Zealanders, for whom days such as Anzac Day, Waitangi Day and Queen's Birthday, are solely days for sporting occasions.

Ecumenical Movement

The ecumenical movement has received some attention lately which has focussed on it specifically as a distinct entity in its own right rather than as an aspect of mainline church preoccupations. There is something of an optimism, hope and even faith expressed in the ecumenical movement by the following two writers.

19. Hinchcliff, p. 100.

The best hope for the Christian future of New Zealand's national life and culture lies in the modern Christian Unity Movement with which all the major churches in New Zealand have become intimately involved. Our national church, concerned with the life of New Zealand as a whole and with its place in the larger world, may have been an impossible dream for the nineteenth century pioneers. For us today it has become both an urgent necessity and also a much nearer possibility, because of the remarkable transformation in inter-Church relationships in recent years.²⁰

... more and more members of the Churches now believe that the essentials of their heritage can be preserved in a church that more nearly fits the New Zealand situation. Only when that church emerges will the trends we have been trying to discern have a real opportunity to flourish. At that stage it will become clearly what New Zealand experience has done and is doing for Christianity in the re-shaping of her faith, worship, life and witness.²¹

Both writers were writing in 1966. Similar expressions can be found amidst the five short speeches made by Sir Bernard Fergusson (Governor-General, 1962-67) on the subject of church unity. Fergusson recognised that his position could be of importance to the ecumenical movement:

I must make it clear that none of these speeches was delivered in any way *ex cathedra* in my capacity as Governor-General, although as such I have felt it my duty to do what I could to encourage the Churches in their concern for unity.²²

Though it is not clear why Fergusson thought it was 'his duty' to further ecumenism, perhaps it was due to his perception of the role of Governor-General being that of a

20. Merlin-Davies, W. 'Church and Nation' Landfall vl. 20 No. 1 (1966), p. 22.

21. Geering, L. 'The Church in the New World' Landfall vl. 20 No. 1 (1966), p. 30.

22. Fergusson, Sir B. Five Addresses on Church Unity (Wellington, Reeds, 1967) foreword.

unifying symbol in New Zealand society. Such a role would suit the idea that the ecumenical movement does in some way relate to the concept of civil religion. Colin Brown mentions this possibility:

... to return to Mr Kirk's funeral once again, it is worth reiterating that what took place there suggests that a substantial proportion of the population can be activated by symbols and causes although probably not by specifically Christian ones. Perhaps, then, a wider ecumenism is called for. Instead of asking how Christians can create a national church to influence the nation *perhaps* the questions for Christian and churches are: How can they contribute to the creation of a 'civil religion' in a religiously pluralistic society, assist in guarding against its prostitution by politicians and others? and can such a 'civil religion' do anything to diminish the polarisation which has emerged in New Zealand society in recent years?²³

The suggestion that perhaps the energies of the Christian community towards ecumenism could be redirected towards the formation of a 'civil religion' is a surprising correspondence of purpose, and the 'creation' of a civil religion in this manner echoes Rousseau's original application of the term. This makes the point that the way a 'civil religion' could be interpreted (as we have seen with some Waitangi protesters), can differ considerably. That a plausible connection between the ecumenical movement and civil religion can even be made at all, shows how dependent commentators are on interpreting the fragile correspondences correctly. At the present time there may be too many possible ways of interpreting 'civil religion' on too little evidence.

23. 'The Ecumenical Contribution' Religion in N.Z. Society, (2nd ed., eds. B. Colless and P. Donovan) p. 93. Italics in original.

Conservation Movement

Nature protection or conservation movements usually base their appeals to New Zealanders on such notions as preservation, conservation, and a balanced environment. A group such as the Native Forest Action Council (NFAC) is interesting in the way it communicates its point of view to the community. How would this do for a sacred ceremony?"

It was a clear cold evening, and snow lay thickly on the ground. But the participants were warmed by a huge ceremonial campfire... The site chosen for the ceremony had much symbolic significance, for the magnificent red beech forests of the Maruia valley are destined to be clear-felled... Illuminated by a hand-held hurricane lamp, the Declaration was then passed from hand to hand around the fire as each delegate added his or her signature... The spirit of Maruia was on the move.²⁴

Now the Native Forests Action Council is not a religious body but they quite freely use religious language to instill a sense of reverence for the forests they wish to protect. Words such as "sacrilege", "sacred", "symbolic", "untouched", "virgin" are employed again and again. Forests may be associated with the interiors of churches or cathedrals by the use of such words as "arched-over", "vaults", or "sanctum". Maori mythology may also be drawn on, especially the Maori reverence for their land.

Sometimes NFAC is quite plainly aware of its 'religious' crusade, as this example from 1985 shows:

The concept of the national park is an adventure of the spirit. It is born of an appreciation of the sacred or sublime in pristine nature. Yet in modern secular European discourse such concepts seem to have retreated below the surface of our culture. We need to recover and express them, if we are to successfully

24. Beechleaves (Nelson, Native Forests Action Council, 1975) p. 1. Shortened to highlight use of language.

defend our national parks, native forests and wild rivers.²⁵

The environment and waters of the park have a sacred quality to many who strongly believe intrusive developments should be avoided. The Triune Corporation wants the water from the national park - and does not want to consider any other location - precisely because the sacred status of national parks have so protected them from development and pollution that the words 'from a national park' represent the water marketer's international seal of purity.²⁶

One would not think that any proposed civil religious tradition could have any particular links with a conservation group, but it is of interest to note that if political parties use any religious-like language at all they invariably do so under the environment portfolio. Recently, for example, Russell Marshall (Minister for the Environment), commenting on the issue of the Triune Corporation's proposal for exporting water from Fiordland National Park, remarked: "... it is actually sacrilege in my view to think of desecrating Fiordland National Park in that way."²⁷

The idea of a 'conservation religion' may be far-fetched when mooted on its own, but when allied (as Colless and Donovan suggest) with 'folk religion' or even, as I have suggested, with civil religion, then it seems that the idea may have to be taken seriously if we are not to neglect an important area of concern and interest for many New Zealanders.

25. 'Taha Maori Shows the Way' Bush Telegraph (Nelson, Joint Campaign on Native Forests, 1985) p. 2.

26. Ibid., p. 3.

27. The Press 13th April 1985, p. 6.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER III

This chapter has been dealing with some of the ramifications of the concept of civil religion. It is concluded that even when the 'evidence' for a civil religion is amassed together, it fails to make a convincing case. Neither a calendar of 'state ritual' nor a comparative list of 'sacred factors' yields enough material to clearly justify the existence of a discernible civil religion.

Other factors also tend to point this way. The plausible use of other terms such as 'patriotism', 'nationalism', or 'domesticated Christianity' questions the validity of employing the term 'civil religion'. A day such as Hiroshima Day receives almost as much attention as Waitangi Day or Anzac Day, and would apparently be receptive to being accepted into the tradition of a civil religion, yet so far this has not occurred.

Much of the persuasiveness of the concept of civil religion relies upon the broad inclusion of a wide range of activities and events which had not been formerly considered religious. When this approach is applied to areas such as rugby participation, or the ecumenical movement, or nature conservation groups, it can be seen that a separate religious context could arguably be granted to them as well. Such an approach is likely to lead to an increasing diversification of opinion on what constitutes religious practices in New Zealand society.

This approach to the current religious situation in New Zealand, reflecting as it does the falling away of established religious practices and the increasing diversity

of new popularist movements, may well be the correct one to adopt. But it is foreseeable that it may become very difficult to effectively discuss religious practices if there is a wide divergence of opinion on what constitutes a 'religion'.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Our revels now are ended. These our actors, as I
foretold you were all spirits, and are melted into
air, into thin air: and, like the baseless fabric
of this vision, the cloud-capp'd towers, the
gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, the great
globe itself, yea, all which it inherit shall
dissolve, and, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
leave not a rack behind...

(Act IV, scene I The Tempest, W.Shakespeare)

In the previous three chapters of this thesis the proposal that a 'civil religion' exists in New Zealand society was studied and discussed. Some observations by New Zealand scholars were considered in Chapter I, and following their suggestions, Chapter II examined various activities and information that might be considered as 'evidence' of a civil religion. Chapter III discussed the relevance of this 'evidence' to the topic, and the usefulness generally of the concept of civil religion within the New Zealand context.

Both Chapters II and III concluded that the evidence for a current civil religion existing in New Zealand is tenuous. A sparse 'ritual calendar' of State events; a lack of much real public participation in these events; and an evident decline in the observance of some State rituals and commemorations, were some of the reasons given for this conclusion.

It was noticed, however, that a case for the existence of a civil religion could perhaps be made for the period falling approximately between the two World Wars, say from 1919-1945. The reason for this suggestion is the extent of evidence from this period. For example, the emergence and continuation of the Anzac tradition; speeches by leading politicians that mingle national and religious themes; the strength of observance of Armistice Day; and the patriotism displayed in schools on such occasions as Saluting the Flag (and also T.B.Strong's proposals for "patriotic" school ceremonies), coloured the period with the sort of activities that might well be called 'civil religion'.

It was also pointed out in Chapter III that a dominant and central part of any suggested civil religion is played by the Anzac tradition. Indeed, Anzac Day and its associated symbols are so obviously important to the concept of civil religion that without them, it would be very much harder to make any convincing argument for a civil religion.

The Anzac ceremony, with its emphasis on both male and military values, arguably stands as much as part of the male mythology that may exist in New Zealand, as of any supposed civil religion. As one observer commented: "the male mythology expressed in rugby and war is not a peripheral aspect of New Zealand history, but central to a whole range of experience."¹

This point raises the question of whether civil religion is actually more an aspect of this male mythology than any separate entity. Obviously there is neither space nor time within this thesis to study this potentially broad area, but some points can be noted. For instance, there is the militarism present in some civil religious rituals, such as troops being present on Anzac Day, Armistice Day, and until recently, the Opening of Parliament. There is also the use of artillery units to give the customary 21-gun salute on the Queen's Birthday, and, as has been previously noted, the use of military speakers and themes on Anzac Day.

This militarism of course implies a male emphasis, and it is interesting to see how this aspect, coupled particularly with the male association with rugby football, arises at regular intervals in the evidence studied by this

1. Phillips, p. 103.

thesis. Is it significant also that a day on which the State has no real involvement, Hiroshima Day, is both dedicated to peace, and (at least in the Christchurch district) prominently involves women and children in the performance of its rituals?

It cannot be baldly stated that civil religion either does or does not exist in New Zealand, since, in large measure, this judgement depends on the frames of reference adopted as to what may constitute a 'civil religion'. In other words, on what basis are we to select information for study? This thesis chose as its study area the 'middle-ground' of scholarly opinion as to what constitutes a 'civil religion', but the possibility that the concept has more validity from another perspective cannot be entirely put aside.

If the heading of this thesis, "The Insubstantial Pageant", may have seemed to pre-judge the topic somewhat, I hope at least by now that the reader is aware of the complexity of this subject sufficiently to consider the title apt.

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APPENDIX I

REMEMBRANCE DAY 1983

Citizens throughout New Zealand are requested to observe Remembrance Day on Sunday, 13 November.

The observance of this day should be similar to that of Remembrance Day last year. Two minutes' silence should be observed from 11 a.m.

The Government trusts that all churches will agree to arrange, as far as practicable, for a morning service on this day, to commence at such time as to enable two minutes' silence to be observed at 11 o'clock.

When a citizens' memorial service is held, it is suggested that it should be at the local cenotaph or war memorial.

Dated at Wellington this day of October 1983.

(D A Highet)

Minister of Internal Affairs

APPENDIX II

Graph showing percentage of stated religious adherence from census returns from 1935-1981. All figures from New Zealand Year Books, 1935-1981.

